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135.





THE
VALE OF PROBATION.

A Dream.

BY
SAMUEL HOBSON, LL. B.
CURATE OF KIRSTEAD, NORFOLK.

“ Dream after dream ensues ;
And still they dream that they shall still succeed,
And still are disappointed. Rings the world
With the vain stir. I sum up half mankind,
And add two-thirds of the remaining half,
And find the total of their hopes and fears
Dreams, empty dreams.” COWPER.

London:
ROAKE AND VARTY, 31, STRAND.

1837.

135.



THE
VALE OF PROBATION.

A Dream.

PART FIRST.

THE
VALE OF PROBATION.

IT is, I confess, an almost hopeless—some will call it a presumptuous task, to attempt to gain the attention of my fellow-dreamers (for dreamers most people will be found to be, whether they acknowledge it or not) to my airy castles, when they are all so busily occupied in raising their own baseless edifices. And it will probably be thought cruel for any one to rouse men from a—perhaps pleasant dream, unless he is sure that he can make them amends for the interruption. This the author cannot indeed promise. All he can plead in his defence for venturing to disturb their slumber is, that he sincerely desires to be of service to them. He will engage, however, neither to trespass on their attention for any long period, nor to clothe his dream in needless obscurity and mystery. It shall be

related with so much plainness, that the reader will have no reason to bewail the loss of any of those cunning expounders of Dreams, which were once to be found in every village, but whose occupation is now—thanks to the efforts of “The Schoolmaster”—nearly gone. He will easily understand it without any other Interpreter than the one which, I trust, is now to be found in every habitation, from the noblest palace to the lowliest cottage, throughout the land—THE BIBLE.

Let me, however, just observe to the reader, that as he will have no need to go *from home* in order to get an explanation of the Dream, so he will have the goodness to look *at home*, in order that he may apply the moral to the person for whom it is intended.

Before I relate the Dream itself, it may be right to give a brief account of the circumstances to which it owes its origin. Know, then, courteous and benevolent reader, that on Sunday, the 21st of —, in this present year, I happened, during the course of a long journey, to be staying at an Inn, in the village of S——, in the County of N——. I was waiting until the close of the Sabbath in order to resume my journey, for (though the confes-

sion may subject me to much ridicule in these liberal days) I never feel quite comfortable when travelling, without any necessity, on the Day which God commanded to be kept holy. Desiring to attend the Parish Church, I was directed to a footpath across some fields, which, after a winding and varied course through tangled brushwood and romantic cliffs, at length terminated at the gate of the cemetery, in which stood the sacred Edifice. It was situated upon an eminence about a mile from the village to which it belonged. On entering the Church I found the Minister in the Reading Desk, and the clerk just coming from the belfry to take his usual place. Seeing no congregation, I wondered why the service should commence so early as to prevent the parishioners from attending: and I began to think that there was great need of reform on this point. Like many other reformers, however, I afterwards found I was too precipitate in my conclusions, and had mistaken the object for which that salutary operation was requisite. I soon learnt that it was neither the Church-clock which wanted regulating, nor the clerk that wanted punctuality, nor the Minister who wanted either zeal, or piety or ability. But

it was evident that reformation was needful *somewhere*; otherwise, a place dedicated to the service of God could never exhibit, on the morning of the Sabbath, so desolate an appearance. The fault could not be in the *time* fixed upon for the commencement of divine worship, for it was already past eleven o'clock. Nor could the distance of the Church from the village be pleaded as a reason for the non-attendance of the parishioners: for when, after looking very carefully around, I discovered about half a dozen individuals, who formed the congregation, their appearance at once destroyed the excuse of *distance*, which at first I was willing to offer for the absence of the parishioners. One old man, bent nearly double by age and infirmity, two little boys, who appeared to be his grandsons—and three or four venerable matrons, whose stout walking sticks, reared against the end of the bench on which their owners sat, shewed that their tottering frames required support in walking. These, with the parish clerk and Minister, were the only persons present. Seeing, therefore, these aged and infirm creatures attending the House of Prayer, I was unable to discover any satisfactory reason for the absence of their neigh-

bours. More especially, as I understood that there existed no feeling of ill-will against the Clergyman. His morals were irreproachable, the doctrines he taught were always agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and his language remarkable for plainness and simplicity. Yet were the pews and benches unoccupied, except by the few individuals before noticed ! Though the service had now commenced, and the Minister was reading the Liturgy in a solemn and devout manner, I was for some time unable to fix my attention to the service. Having come from a distant part of the Island, where the inhabitants are generally very punctual in their attendance at the House of God, I could not soon recover from the surprise into which the present singular spectacle threw me. I thought the whole affair was a dream. Fancies sometimes end in realities, even as predictions are frequently the cause of their own accomplishment. It proved so in my case. For, after I had returned to the Inn, and eaten my dinner, my thoughts were actively employed on the scene which I had just witnessed. And while I was endeavouring to account for the strange conduct of the parishioners, in so generally neglecting the duty of "assembling them-

selves together" in the Lord's House, I became very drowsy, and, whether from fatigue, or because I breathed in an atmosphere which, to judge from the character of the people, seemed to be pervaded by the spirit of slumber, and hence was overpowered by the soporific influence, or from whatever cause it might arise, I fell asleep, and had the following

Dream.

"Are there who wrap the world so close about them,
They see no further than the clouds? and dance
On heedless vanity's fantastic toe,
Till stumbling at a straw, in their career,
Headlong they plunge, where end both dance and
song?" YOUNG.

Methought I was in a beautiful Island. It was pleasingly diversified by hills and dales, woods and rivers, luxuriant fields and verdant meadows. In various parts of an extensive valley, which lay at my feet, I beheld shepherds reclining in the shade of majestic oaks, watching their snowy flocks that quietly cropped the tender herbage, or quenched their thirst in the meandering stream which flowed through the pastures. Their faithful and sa-

gacious dogs sat at the feet of their masters, now looking at them, now directing their eyes towards the scattered flocks under their protection. The bleatings of the sheep, and lowings of cattle in the adjoining meadows, were mingled with the delicious notes which, ever and anon, issued from the rustic pipes of the shepherds. Husbandmen were occupied in ploughing the fertile glebe in other parts of this lovely valley, and were singing, as they pursued their toil, with all the cheerfulness of contented and happy minds. The woods and groves around no less delighted the eye with their rich foliage, than attracted the ear by the charming melody which their feathered inhabitants produced. The heat of an unclouded sun would have been oppressive, but its rays were tempered by a delicious breeze, which gently swept across the Vale, and slightly murmured in its passage through the dense foliage of the shrubs and trees.

“Thus was this place
 A happy rural seat of various view ;
 Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and
 balm,
 Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
 Hung amiable, Hesperian fables true,

If true, here only, and of delicious taste.
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed,
Or palmy hillock ; or the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store."

MILTON.

While I was enjoying the delightful prospect before me, a venerable man approached the elevated knoll on which I was seated. Though his hoary hair and furrowed countenance indicated extreme age, yet his erect and majestic stature, his firm step, and his eyes of undimmed lustre, shewed that he was still in possession of no small portion of strength and vigour. The mildness and dignity of his countenance and demeanour were calculated at once to excite affection, and to command veneration ; and so much was I prepossessed by his appearance that, though an entire stranger to him, I felt no difficulty in addressing him. I arose and respectfully saluted him. He did not appear surprised to meet a stranger in such a place, but courteously returned my salutation. "What a sweet place is this !" I exclaimed, "surely it is Paradise itself !" He shook his head, and a pensive smile for a moment illumined his intelligent countenance.

“So it appears at a distance,” he replied, “and so in reality it might be, were it not for the folly and infatuation of the inhabitants.” “You amaze me,” I replied, astonished at his words, “those I have seen in the valley below seem contented and happy.” “Many of them are so,” he replied, “but a far greater number would give you a very different account of themselves. You cannot at this distance judge of their true condition; but as you are a stranger here, I will give you, if such is your desire, some information relative to this country, and to the people by whom it is occupied.” On my thanking him for his courteous offer, and declaring, that nothing would afford me more pleasure than to receive some account of the Valley and its inhabitants, he seated himself by my side on the summit of the hill, and, after a brief interval, thus commenced his narrative.

“The country which you behold from this mountain is called the Vale of Probation. It is of considerable extent, and contains great varieties of soil and climate. Yet is it wisely ordered by the beneficent PRINCE, who rules over this extensive valley, that the occupiers of every portion of it—those who dwell in the

most rugged and barren spots, and under an inclement sky, no less than those who possess the more fertile and genial districts, should equally partake of his bounty, and have the means of comfort and enjoyment placed within their reach, without any distinction. For though he bestows some kind of things in greater profusion on a few of his subjects, than he does upon the rest, yet they are generally things of no intrinsic value, and incapable in themselves of conferring true happiness: but his highest and best gifts are impartially conferred on all who will accept them; so that if any of his subjects are destitute of what would render them truly happy, it is entirely their own fault.

Their conditions are as varied as is the face of the country. The lot of some is to have dignities, honours, wealth, and influence—others are suffered to be in a state of comparative poverty, and pass their lives in obscurity. And though, on comparing the two classes together—on contrasting the rich and powerful with the indigent and helpless, you would hardly believe what I have just told you of the Prince's impartiality, in the disposal of his most valuable gifts; yet nothing is more

true. Those are his best gifts which impart the greatest and most lasting happiness; and these are equally accessible to all. They are, however, far more frequently sought and obtained by the lowest and most obscure of his subjects, than by the noble and powerful. And the reason is this. The less substantial and, consequently, less valuable gifts have a great tendency to blind the eyes, and to weaken the understandings of men; so that it often happens that the possessors of a large portion of these inferior things, are so infatuated as to esteem them more highly than those precious gifts, which invariably conduce to the lasting benefit of the receivers. Many persons of this class, when invited by the KING to come to him, and to be invested with the highest dignities and honours of his kingdom, have absolutely refused the invitation; so that he has been heard frequently to declare, how hurtful to the true interests of his subjects were those very things which they were so anxious to possess.* Unless, therefore, these apparently favoured subjects of the Prince have great prudence, wisdom and moderation, so as neither to abuse his bounty, nor to neglect

* Mat. xix. 21, 23. xxii. 4, 5.

applying for still better gifts,* their very advantages are converted into curses, and lead to their ruin. It is difficult to credit this, and yet universal experience confirms the truth of my statement.

There was once a great personage in yonder Vale, to whom the PRINCE gave vast possessions of every kind, and he was a very wise and good man, and knew how to make the best use of the things entrusted to his care, yet he confessed that they were not sufficient to confer happiness.† And he warned the other inhabitants of the Vale of the danger of trusting to such things,‡ and advised them to ask of the PRINCE a gift whose “price is above rubies.”|| And a greater than he, showed both by precept and his own example, how dangerous he considered those objects at which the inhabitants so earnestly aimed, and how worthless they were in his estimation.§ It has sometimes happened also that those, upon whom the Prince had not bestowed any portion of those inferior gifts, have by great labour and perseverance at length acquired a large share

* 1 Cor. vii. 31. James i. 5. † Eccles. ii.

‡ Prov. xi. 28. || Prov. iv. 5—9.

§ Luke xii. 15—21. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

of them, but they were seldom happy in consequence. They found that they had been in the pursuit of a phantom, and had spent their labour and strength for that which could give them no real satisfaction.* Nay, many of such seemingly fortunate individuals have declared, that in proportion as they rose to wealth and power, and eminence, their cares, anxieties, and sorrows increased, and their peace and comfort rapidly diminished. However profusely, therefore, those temporary gifts of the Prince may be scattered around them, they find that happiness still eludes their grasp, unless they seek for and obtain a treasure, which is within the reach of all, and which is considered "the principal thing," and absolutely necessary to their welfare."†

"Then, doubtless," I said, "the poor and obscure inhabitants of the Valley are all anxious to possess the treasure in which true happiness consists, as their attention is not drawn away from it by the cares and perplexities attendant on those, who have large possessions." "They have certainly," answered my companion, "less danger to encounter, and meet

* Isa. lv. 2.

† Prov. iv. 7. 1 Cor. i. 30, Luke x. 42.

with fewer difficulties in their search after the needful treasure, than their more wealthy countrymen, but many of them, it is to be lamented, are so foolish and wicked as to envy the rich in their possessions, though they well know that *they* cannot obtain them, nor long enjoy them, if they were to be placed in their hands. This eager desire and vain longing after such things, completely prevents them from acquiring that better gift—that substantial and durable treasure,—which is kept in the storehouse of the Prince for all who sincerely desire and seek for it. This is even a worse infatuation than that to which the wealthy are very liable, who fancy that the object of life is only to eat, drink, and be merry, and, therefore, is hardly to be endured, except in the midst of abundance. But these poor, blind creatures act as if they believed, that happiness consisted in coveting and desiring, though with no prospect of obtaining, such unsubstantial things. They resemble the hungry traveller who rejects a basket of wholesome provisions, and seeks to satisfy his hunger by grasping at certain glittering pebbles on the sea shore, which are frequently washed away as soon as he approaches them, and which,

even when in his power, cannot appease his hunger. The one class trusts in a fleeting shadow, the other fondly pursues the shadow of a shade."

"And what can be the reason," I inquired, "that both classes should feel this absurd preference for these temporary and unsubstantial gifts?" "One cause," he answered, "is their want of reflection—an infirmity to which they are all naturally very prone." "Then surely," I exclaimed, "they are more worthy of pity than of censure, since it is owing to their weakness and ignorance." "They would be so," replied the old man, "were they without the means of obtaining the knowledge of what is best for them, and without any remedy for their natural infirmities; but they are not left in so helpless a condition. The kind Sovereign of the country has provided ample means for restoring them to thought and reflection, and they might all be enabled both to know, and to choose those things which would make them truly happy, did not their obstinacy and negligence greatly counteract his benevolent designs.

You must know, that, among the many royal ordinances which have been promulgated

for the regulation of his kingdom, and the peace and comfort of his subjects, there is one of immense utility and importance. Though it is a *royal ordinance*, and, therefore, cannot be disobeyed under a heavy penalty—even the loss of the KING's favour and protection—yet it is moreover so great and honourable a privilege, that it is astonishing that his subjects do not always receive it with ready and cheerful obedience. This privilege is the permission, which he graciously affords to his people, to present themselves at his Court on certain days. There is no exception made. The high and low, the rich and poor, the powerful and feeble, are all equally welcome to his presence. And so great an effect has this privilege on all who rightly receive it, that the rich, without losing any of their possessions, become poor; and the poor, without any great or visible increase to their slender portion, become rich: and then the inequality of the two conditions is by no means so great, as their appearance might lead you to suppose.* In this case, that is to say, when the poor and rich come to the PRINCE's Court with right dispositions, the former lose all eagerness and

* Prov. xiii. 7. Mat. v. 3. Luke vi. 20.

desire after the possessions of their wealthy neighbours, and are only intent on obtaining the favour of the King, which infallibly makes them rich indeed—rich, because it renders them truly happy : and the latter find so much beauty and excellence in the gifts which the gracious Prince, on those occasions, generally distributes with a liberal hand, that their own possessions sink into mere insignificance ; so that, though abounding in wealth, they feel themselves poor in his presence, unless his favour and bounty be conferred upon them.

On those public days some of the KING's Ministers are always present to receive the subjects, to direct them how to offer their petitions, how to make their acknowledgments for favours received, how to propitiate his anger for offences committed, and how to obtain his future bounties, and to regulate their conduct agreeably to his will and pleasure. The PRINCE himself does not, indeed, appear before them, but he is present beneath a vail, through which, unseen himself, he sees all his subjects : he hears all they say, all they confess, and all which they desire. Nor does he disdain to be there, even when only two or three of his subjects are at his Court,



so great is his condescension." "Only two or three!" I exclaimed in astonishment, "I understood you to say that the KING's Court was open to *all* on certain days." "It is even so," replied my companion, "but notwithstanding the great honour and benefit of this privilege, many of the people entirely disregard it, several attend his Court very irregularly, and not a few lose the advantages which they would otherwise receive, by their heedless and disrespectful behaviour while there. The former persons neglect, the latter abuse, this valuable privilege: and hence, that which was intended to make them think, and reflect, and discriminate between good and evil, to keep up their reverence and affection for their Prince, and to be the channel through which his most precious gifts were to be conveyed to them, is, in many instances, rendered almost useless by their perverseness and ingratitude. For it is not to be supposed that the PRINCE will extend his favour either to those, who are indifferent about it, or to those who, under the pretence of coming to his Court to honour him, only insult him by their careless and irreverent demeanour. Now, as they cannot be happy without his favour, as they cannot

obtain his favour, unless they seek it in the way which he hath prescribed for communicating it, and as every thing is done to facilitate their approach to his presence, and to place his inestimable gifts within the reach of all his subjects, the unhappiness which reigns over a large portion of yonder people, is evidently to be ascribed to their own folly." "Surely," I said, "the people who live in so delightful a country, who enjoy so many natural advantages, and are under the government of so mild and beneficent a SOVEREIGN, must have entirely forgotten the hand which bestows upon them these blessings, ere they could act in the careless and disrespectful manner you describe." "You are right;" he answered, "forgetfulness of their gracious Prince is a very prevailing error among this people, and the principal cause of their misery.* How they should fall into such an error is, indeed, astonishing, when it is considered that every thing which meets their eyes, is calculated to bring their Benefactor to their remembrance. It is, however, a wilful error. The people shut their eyes and ears against any thing which is likely to cause them to remember him, and try in various ways to banish his image

* Jer. iii. 21.

from their recollection. It would take an age to recount the devices and inventions which are put in practice by them to effect this object.

Some pass the greater part of their lives in the pursuit of what they seem to consider a bright and substantial treasure, but which is nothing but a vapour floating before their eyes. And though the most successful hunters after this vapour have generally at length confessed that they had pursued only a bubble, and that the acquisition of it seldom or never realized their expectations, yet the confession of their disappointment has but little effect in tempering the eagerness of others, in this vain pursuit. If they gain nothing by the chase, they at least succeed in one object, which they seem very desirous of attaining; that of banishing their good KING from their remembrance. The dazzling appearance which this vapour has, or seems to have, in the eyes of its pursuers, renders them so eager after it that they willingly risk health and fortune, life and limb, for the chance of obtaining it. When acquired it has often a very intoxicating influence on its possessor. His brain becomes tumefied, his imagination over-heated, and, in his own fancy, he rises above the clouds, and looks down with

pity and contempt on his fellow-mortals, who are still grovelling on the earth beneath. But the delusion very seldom continues long. The bubble suddenly bursts, the vapour disperses, and the poor mortal who thought himself raised to the rank of a god, at length finds himself lying in a dark valley, exhausted, disappointed, and hopeless.*

Another mode of forgetting their gracious PRINCE, is practised by a great number of his subjects, and that is, the pursuit of a laborious occupation which engrosses all their time and attention. They endeavour to find and heap together vast quantities of yellow and white dust, which is to be met with in some parts of the Valley, and which, though it possesses no intrinsic worth, they hold in great esteem, and almost idolize. It is scarcely credible to what an extent this pursuit is carried, and what privations, fatigues, perils and sufferings the people will endure, when there is a prospect of acquiring some of this dust. Though thousands have lost their lives in this pursuit, yet are the others equally ardent to enter upon the uncertain and perilous labour. Yet when large quantities have been scraped together, the pos-

* John xii. 43.

essors have seldom been known to derive much enjoyment from their acquisitions. Some unhappy persons, after toiling for years, have suddenly lost all the fruits of their unwearied labours, when they thought themselves in sure possession. For the dust is of a very subtile nature, easily escapes from the hands which gather it, or is blown away by the wind in a moment.* In such cases the poor dupes who gathered it become most miserable. They have no other source to which they can turn for comfort, for on the accumulation of this dust all their thoughts and affections were centered. A broken heart is, therefore, no unusual effect of this destruction of their hopes.

There was one man in particular, who dwelt in a pleasant and fertile part of the Vale, whose end was very deplorable. He rose early and late took rest, in order that he might follow this pursuit. Not satisfied with filling all the buildings he possessed with the dust, he greatly enlarged them, and built new warehouses for its reception. When the PRINCE, by some of his servants, remonstrated with him, on the folly of thus spending his labour and strength in what could not profit him, since he made no

* Prov. xxiii. 5.

use of it, he said that he meant to fill only a few more storehouses, and then he would desist from his toils, take his rest, and quietly enjoy himself to the end of life. It was in vain to tell him that, while he was so deeply engaged in seeking this dust, he had forgotten to make the periodical visit to the Public Court, or to warn him of the consequences of exciting the displeasure of his Sovereign. Their remembrances and warnings had no effect upon him. It was not convenient to him to attend—he had so many things upon his mind—he should have more leisure afterwards, and at a more convenient season he would go and pay his respects. With such excuses he endeavoured to satisfy himself for his neglect and forgetfulness of the PRINCE. But, as it usually happens to those who procrastinate in this way, he had no opportunity afterwards of availing himself of the privilege of visiting the Court; for long before he had filled the whole of his houses, or gathered enough to satisfy his wishes, he suddenly lost his life.” “What a melancholy instance of folly and madness!” I exclaimed, “but is there really no use in this dust?” “Not in the least,” he replied, “to those whose affections are totally absorbed by it, for, as I before

stated, it causes them to forget and even to hate their beneficent **SOVEREIGN**, and consequently, leads to the forfeiture of his favour and the loss of happiness. Yet is it not without use to them who have wisdom enough to employ it properly. In order to be beneficial it should be scattered about. And when this is done by the good and faithful subjects of the **PRINCE** (as they never fail to do when it is in their power) it is the means of affording much comfort and joy to their fellow-subjects. Nor do they lose any thing by their liberal conduct. For the more they scatter it, the more it increases. And they are themselves partakers of the enjoyment which they thus confer upon others. While those who think only of accumulating it, not only lose all the pleasure which arises from the consciousness of making others happy, but are often defeated in their object, and behold their hoards vanish away.* But they who are so engrossed by the care and anxiety of gathering the dust as to forget their **KING**, and to live as if he was not their Ruler, seldom are inclined to disperse any of it for the benefit of others. They live only for themselves. While, on the contrary, the true subjects, being in constant communication

* **Prov. xi. 24.**

with their beneficent and gracious **PRINCE**, feel so much affection for him, and so admire his bountiful acts, that they, almost unconsciously, imitate his example, and distribute a large proportion of their abundance among the needy. They do not refuse their assistance to the really necessitous, even if they are evil and ungrateful persons, for they observe that their **GREAT KING** bestows many favours upon all without distinction; and for his sake, and because they know that in so doing they shall please him, they cheerfully imitate his beneficence.* And as they constantly look to their **PRINCE** for direction, and resolve to appropriate for the benefit of their needy fellow-creatures regularly a portion of what he gives them, they are not only enabled to distribute their bounty extensively, but also instructed how to cause by its distribution the greatest possible good. They are benevolent on principle, and not the creatures of a momentary excitement, sometimes capriciously refusing the petitions even of the deserving; but they proceed in a steady, uniform course of beneficence. Their care and prudence, no less than their self-denial and disinterestedness, tend to enlarge their means

* Mat. v. 45. 1 John iv. 20, 21.

of doing good.* Yet it is not the extent, or regularity, or willingness of their bounty which obtains for them their KING's approbation; they might give away all their possessions, and yet be destitute of his favour.† It is the motive or principle by which they are actuated that is of chief importance, and that motive is, love for their gracious PRINCE. They who give a single grain away from their affection to him are more esteemed by him than the ostentatious dispenser of large hoards.‡ “And how,” I asked, “is this love to their Ruler to be prevented from growing cold, seeing there are so many things in the Vale which are calculated to distract the attention of the inhabitants?” “The best means of preventing this fatal symptom,” he answered, “is a regular and reverential attendance at the Public Court, on the appointed days, and the constant use of another most important privilege which their Sovereign hath granted them, namely, application at his Court of Private Audience. This differs in some particulars from the Public Court, though the same object—that of making the subjects better acquainted with their PRINCE—is aimed at by both.

* 1 Cor. xvi. 2. † 1 Cor. xiii. 3. ‡ Mark xii. 43.

The Court to which *all* the people are invited is opened on certain days solemnly set apart for that purpose. They recur at the end of every hundred and forty-four hours. And the Courts opened on those days are meant for the accommodation and benefit of all classes of his subjects *collectively*. They are commanded to be present at them :* and they who disobey the command not only lose a high and glorious privilege, but are in imminent danger of entirely *forgetting* their Prince, and of being consigned, in consequence, to a very grievous punishment.† The Private Audience is intended for the use of the people *individually*. This is at *all times* open. Here the subject can, in private, freely converse with his PRINCE, tell his wants, acknowledge his errors, shew his poverty, and solicit remission from the debt which by the Law of his country he ought to pay. You will naturally suppose that those subjects, who avail themselves most constantly of this privilege, are not so punctual in their attendance at the Public Court, since, having at a Private Audience made their requests known to the PRINCE, they might plead this as a reason for their non-attendance in Public; but the contrary is the

* Heb. x. 25.

† Psalm ix. 17.

fact. They who seek his presence most frequently in private, are always eager to visit him on the appointed Days. Knowing the greatness of the privilege, and feeling the benefit and delight of having communication with their SOVEREIGN, they prepare with joy and alacrity to accept his invitation on every return of these public days.* While, on the contrary, those who seldom or never seek a private audience, are very irregular in their attendance on his Court, and very rarely derive any benefit from attending, in consequence of their lukewarmness, carelessness, and stupidity.

I have been the more particular in noticing these things, because they are important means supplied by the goodness and foresight of the PRINCE to his subjects, in order to counteract the baneful influence of that forgetfulness to which they are too prone—a forgetfulness which leads them to grasp at shadows, and to set their affections on the dust and clay of the valley, while they neglect their best and highest interests. And were those means duly and sincerely employed by all his subjects, that inordinate love of the dust, or of other things in the valley, would at length be extinguished, and

* Psalm lxxxiv. 1, 2. lv. 17.

the people would enjoy the purest happiness. But this is a course which I can hardly expect will be generally pursued by this perverse and infatuated race. Dost they will still gather, shadows they will try to embrace, bubbles they will follow, in spite of all the advice and warnings that are given to them ; and substantial treasures, the favour of their PRINCE, true peace and comfort, and virtuous enjoyment, they will scarcely think worthy of their pursuit ! And yet, if they would open their eyes and see the effects produced by such absurd conduct, they could not, it might be supposed, make so ridiculous a choice. You shall, if you please, accompany me into the Valley, and I will shew you a few instances of the mischief brought upon this people by their forgetfulness of their PRINCE, and their neglect of his Public and Private Audience. You may thus also have an opportunity of seeing the benefits which an attention to those privileges confers, and you may learn what is the ultimate object of granting these means of improvement to the people. For though they are designed to make the KING's subjects peaceful and happy during their sojourn in the Vale, yet their ultimate object is far more important."

My venerable conductor now arose, and taking his staff in his hand, began to descend the hill with surprising speed and vigour. Our path was certainly not a difficult one, and there were but few obstructions in the way. But we walked too rapidly, and my mind was too much occupied on the things I had seen and heard, to allow me to put any further questions to him. After descending about two-thirds of the way, my conductor seeing me wearied and almost breathless, kindly stopped a few minutes to give me time to recover. We sat down under a noble sycamore, whose widely expanded branches thickly clothed with foliage, formed a canopy over our heads and rendered our situation cool and agreeable.

I observed at the foot of the mountain, and at no great distance from our resting place, a splendid mansion in the midst of a spacious park. It was sheltered from the winds by large and beautiful woods, and clumps of majestic oaks arose at intervals on an extensive lawn, which gently sloped towards a meandering stream. A pleasure boat, with capacious and well-filled sails, was rapidly gliding over its limpid waters. A gay party occupied one end of the boat, and at the other sat a band of

musicians, who filled the air with sweet and lively strains. I gazed on the scene for some minutes in silent admiration. "How happy," at length I exclaimed, "how happy must be the possessor of that delightful mansion, and those charming domains!" "It is indeed natural to suppose," answered the old man, "that the owner of such a paradise must be happy; but experience tells us that happiness is not always connected with large possessions. Abundance cannot satisfy the mind of any one who is destitute of the PRINCE's favour. This is the test by which all, whether rich or poor, should be tried. Do they love their beneficent KING—do they sincerely desire and seek for his favour—and do they gratefully and with delight embrace every opportunity of presenting themselves at his Public and Private Audience? If this can be affirmed of them, you may consider them as happy indeed, though they may be without wealth or possessions, and have to rise early, and late to take rest in order to procure a subsistence. But when any person is destitute of the love and favour of the PRINCE, you may be assured that he has no substantial happiness, though his domains be ever so extensive, and his riches exceed all calculation.

Unfortunately for the late owner of yon delightful estate, he neglected to seek the favour of that beneficent **SOVEREIGN**, to whom he owed every thing, and foolishly and ungratefully despised his privileges, and abused his advantages. His table groaned under the weight of various luxuries—the choicest wines flowed from his storehouses—the most elegant and splendid garments filled his wardrobe—the most costly articles of furniture adorned every room of his spacious mansion, and in his chambers beds of softest down invited him to repose. Here was every thing, you would think, to make a man really happy; but alas! the chief thing was wanting.* His **PRINCE** was totally forgotten. He thought of nothing but new modes of enjoyment. Selfishness was apparent in all his conversation, no less than in his actions. This is usually the besetting fault of those who have driven away all thought of their benevolent **KING**. While he occupies their minds, they are so much delighted with the contemplation of his goodness, dignity, and perfections, that they have little time, and still less inclination, to think about themselves. They become active in works of benevolence, for they cannot long

* Luke x. 42.

know him without endeavouring to imitate his example. The poor man of whom I speak—poor indeed with all his abundance—had neglected to seek this knowledge, had neither affection nor care for his PRINCE, and was therefore selfish in all his pursuits. This also led him to be unfeeling towards his fellow creatures. His inhumanity was so great, that he allowed a poor man—one of his neighbours, who was hungry, faint, and afflicted with a painful disease, to die at his gate, without rendering him any assistance.” “What a horrible character!” I indignantly cried, “surely such another cannot be found in the whole valley!” “Like causes,” my conductor answered, “will produce like effects. Where there is a forgetfulness of the PRINCE, there will most probably be great selfishness and hardness of heart; and when these vices predominate over any man’s mind, there is no inhuman deed, no injustice, nor wickedness which he may not be gradually led to perpetrate. But as you now seem to be recovered from your fatigue we will resume our walk.”

I immediately arose, and followed my guide through a narrow and winding path. It was in the direction of the fine house and grounds

which had lately so much excited my admiration; but after what I had heard, I did not view them with half my former pleasure. I could think only of the late wicked owner's cruelty, and of the poor man's misery. We soon arrived at the massive gate of the Park, and the old man demanded admittance. A porter came and unlocked the gate, and we entered into the beautiful grounds. After walking a few minutes along a smooth carriage road, lined on both sides with towering elms, we found ourselves on the lawn in front of the house. There was, however, but little time given to examine this noble edifice; for we had scarcely come in sight of it, when our attention was suddenly aroused, and our steps arrested by hearing several loud shrieks. They proceeded from one of the upper rooms in the building. Presently a servant made his appearance, hastened to the stable, mounted a horse and rode away with the greatest speed. We hastened forward to ascertain the cause of the alarm, and found the domestics running different ways with looks of consternation and horror. We inquired the cause of all this, but could get no answer. They appeared to have lost the faculty of speech through terror.

While we were hesitating which way to proceed, a surgeon arrived on a foaming horse. He dismounted in great haste, and rushed into the house. We followed him into an elegant dressing room, and the mystery was immediately explained. A young gentleman was extended on a sofa; his eyes were closed, and his countenance pallid with the hue of death. It was the son and heir of the present owner of the estate. A servant supported his head, while the surgeon was examining a wound that appeared in his left side. He shook his head after looking at it, and, ere he could speak, the unfortunate youth uttered a faint cry, and instantly expired. At this moment the gay party, that we had lately seen taking their pleasure on the river, entered the house. The parents of the deceased were foremost; and after making some incoherent inquiries, the father rushed into the dressing room, clasped his child in his arms, and called him by his name: then seeing the dreadful wound, he gave a loud and piercing shriek, and sunk down in a state of insensibility.

My conductor now took hold of my arm, and silently led me away from the melancholy

scene. On descending the stairs we saw an aged domestic, bitterly weeping and talking by turns. He was surrounded by half a dozen of the servants, who were listening to his broken account of the sad catastrophe. "'Tis what I always feared," cried the old domestic, "he would go to such places in spite of all advice: he knew his father detested gambling houses, but he still continued to go privately; and after losing all that he had—aye and much more—he came home, and not daring to tell his father of his imprudence, nor to ask him to pay the immense debts he had contracted, he became desperate and destroyed himself!" We retired from the house immediately—we had heard enough; and so much were we horrified by the sad spectacle, that we walked a considerable distance without exchanging a word.

"Behold," said my venerable conductor at last, "behold the fatal consequences of that insatiate love of wealth which like a demon possesses the minds of too many of these people! Behold the consequences of forgetting their PRINCE, and neglecting the means which he hath provided for eradicating from

from the hearts of his subjects this and every other dangerous inclination!*

This young man was born to great expectations; he was looking forward to the time when he should be sole master of this vast property, and his parents regarded him as the hope and solace of their declining years; yet how suddenly and awfully are their expectations blasted! You heard the account which the old domestic was giving of this unhappy affair. He stated, and stated truly, that he had fallen a victim to his love of gambling. The place which the deceased youth frequented is one where thousands have been reduced to poverty and wretchedness. His father well knew the danger of such places, and had expressly forbidden his son from even entering into any of them; but alas! he had neglected to give him that instruction which would have been his best security against that and every other temptation.† He had provided him with tutors to store his mind with elegant and polite literature, he had engaged masters to teach him the accomplishments of a gentle-

* Jer. xvii. 9. Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. Mat. vii. 7.
James i. 5, 6.

† Prov. xxii. 6. xvi. 6.

man, he had expended large sums in furnishing him with horses, equipage, servants, and every luxury that he desired ; but he forgot to teach him betimes to love and reverence his **SOVEREIGN**. He did not value the benefits, nor avail himself of the privilege, of attending the **Private Audience**, and his son was brought up in ignorance of this means of communicating with his **PRINCE**. As to the **Public Court**, though he did not let him entirely neglect it; yet he taught him by his own example, that his appearance there was merely an outward form. He did not really love the **PRINCE**, nor relish his service, and it was not, of course, to be expected that his son should love or feel any attachment for a Ruler whom he had never known, and the excellence of whose character had never been pointed out to him. The instructions he gave to his son were many of them good, as far as they went, but unfortunately not being founded on the **Laws and Ordinances of the KING**, they had little effect on his mind. For it is very rarely indeed that good advice is well received, or produces any beneficial results, unless the mind on which it is inculcated feels some affection for the **SOVEREIGN** of the country.

It is this affection which constrains all loyal subjects to visit the Court on the appointed days, and brings them still more frequently to the Private Audience." "You stated," I here observed to my companion, "that the young man did sometimes visit the Public Courts; might he not then have heard such advice and instruction, as would have put him on his guard against the dangers and temptations to which he was liable?" "He would undoubtedly," he replied, "hear the best instructions from the Ministers of his SOVEREIGN on those occasions, and, had he followed their advice, he would have avoided those depraved characters who caused his ruin. But it seldom happens that those who only occasionally, or from mere ceremony, attend the Public Courts, are permanently benefitted. They hear without understanding, and follow their own inclinations, though the voice of wisdom may have clearly and distinctly told them the evil consequences of so doing. Had that unhappy youth been led to seek the favour and help of the PRINCE, in the appointed means, he would have been strengthened and encouraged to resist his propensity to this, and every other injurious pursuit.

Though the place to which he was allured, and where he ultimately lost both his peace of mind and his reason, is full of deceitful attractions, and contains many of those glittering bubbles, and large heaps of that white and yellow dust, to which the inhabitants of the Vale are so partial, yet he would have learnt the utter worthlessness, as well as the positive evil of those things. The Book of royal ordinances and directions which is opened by the servants of the PRINCE, on every Court-day, and read aloud to all the subjects who have met together, would have shewn him, as in a glass, the true character of his companions, and the certain destruction to which they were leading him. And though his inclinations might still have urged him to seek their dangerous society, yet conviction of the consequences of yielding to their persuasions would have offered some restraint, and if, sensible of his weakness to withstand such temptations, he had consulted his KING, and requested assistance, all might have been well. His eyes would have been opened to the delusion by which he had been deceived, the path to true glory and honour would have been exhibited to him, in all its beauty, and under

the guidance of his gracious SOVEREIGN he would have entered into it, and pursued his way rejoicing.”*

We now approached a cottage that stood on a declivity, opposite the park which we had just left. It was nearly covered with ivy, and as it was partially seen through the openings in the thickly wooded ground, it had a very picturesque appearance. A waterfall in the back ground, some hundred yards from the cottage, served at once to enliven the scene, and to benefit the inhabitants, by supplying them with the purest water, as the foaming torrent, in its descent to the bottom of the ravine, passed within a short distance of the door. “Here at least,” I exclaimed, “we shall find peace and happiness: the inhabitants of this delightful and secluded spot can be in no danger from the temptations that led to the melancholy catastrophe, which we have just witnessed! Their poverty secures them from the attempts of the wicked, and the obscurity in which they live contributes to their virtue.” “That they are exposed to fewer temptations,” replied my Conductor, “than persons in a higher station, is most

* Psalm xxxii. 8. Job xxxiii. 26.

true, nor is it less so, that this comparative seclusion is favourable to the growth of virtue and peace. The trees on the summit of yon mountain are stunted and blighted by the furious and chilling winds, while the lowly shrubs of the valley are flourishing and luxuriant; yet even these do not always remain unscathed. When the wintry torrent, swollen to an enormous magnitude by the melting of the snow from the distant mountains, descends into the peaceful valley, the lowliest shrub, no less than the stately cedar, may be rooted up and destroyed. The inhabitants of such retreats are undoubtedly less liable to the incursion of many vices and follies, than those who dwell in more populous districts; but they are not altogether exempt from them. The propensity to what is wrong may be as strong in him who lives in solitude, as in the gay visitant of the haunts of dissipation and wickedness, and when opportunity offers the former may plunge into riot and excesses with the same avidity as the latter. Outward circumstances, therefore, afford no just criterion by which to judge of character. For a station the most favourable to the increase of virtue and goodness, may, and often does contain individuals sunk in

depravity ; while, on the other hand, persons are to be found in situations of great temptation, danger, and difficulty, who remain uninfected by the contagion of the immorality and licentiousness which spreads around them, and are bright examples of virtue and integrity.* All depends on their possessing that inward principle of which I have before spoken, namely, a sincere love of the PRINCE. Where this predominates, virtue, goodness, meekness, gentleness, peace and joy are sure to be found ; where it is wanting, you may be assured that none of these benefits can be enjoyed.” “ Then I suppose the presence of this principle in any one may be calculated upon, if he attends the Public Courts regularly ? ” “ I should certainly,” he replied, “ consider such a practice as a favourable sign in any person, and should conclude that he loved the PRINCE, unless other circumstances in his life or conversation should prove the contrary. For some attend the Court from custom, fear, or interest, in whom this principle does not dwell ; but they who truly love their PRINCE are *delighted* to go into his presence.† But of those who utterly despise

* 2 Peter ii. 8.

† Psalm xlii. 4.

and neglect this privilege, there can be no doubt, that they have fallen from their allegiance, and are under the displeasure of their SOVEREIGN. Nor can we have any reasonable grounds for hoping, that they may be restored to his favour, and become dutiful and affectionate subjects, so long as they studiously avoid his presence. He is, indeed, very forbearing and merciful, and ever ready to welcome even the rebellious, on their expressing their sorrow and returning to his service, but they are not likely to see their error so long as they neglect the Public Courts. These are the ordinary channels through which conviction is brought to their minds, and though the PRINCE may, and sometimes does make them sensible of their ill-conduct in other ways, yet they have no reason to expect that he will do so. They ought to seek his forgiveness and favour in the appointed means.* While they seek his presence in private, that they may confess their errors and deficiencies more unreservedly, and enter more minutely into their several wants, and earnestly solicit that assistance and those directions, which are most suitable to their individual conditions,

* Rom. x. 17. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20.

they act so far agreeably to the will of their PRINCE, and will not fail to obtain his favour.* But they will not on this account neglect to visit his Public Courts also. Independent of the good which they hope to derive from such attendance, and of the delight which they experience in coming into his Courts, they feel it a duty to shew publicly their attachment to his service, and their ready and cheerful obedience to his commands. While so many are indifferent about this public duty, *they* rejoice to give a testimony before the eyes of the perverse and disloyal subjects, that *they* are not ashamed to do homage to their beloved PRINCE.† In *general*, therefore, it may be supposed that the regular visitors at the Courts are also accustomed to use the privilege of the Private Audience; and that they who refuse to serve the KING in public cannot value his favour, and that they do not seek him privately; or if they do occasionally use this privilege, it is attended with no beneficial result. They receive neither advice nor assistance, because they want affection, sincerity, and obedience. The two means are so connected in their object that it is im-

* Mat. vi. 6.

† Mark viii. 38. Rom. i. 16.

possible to love one without loving the other. By attending at the Private Audience regularly and faithfully, a person is better prepared to derive both pleasure and profit from the Public Courts—and by his attendance at the latter he is instructed how to present his requests, and what are the most beneficial things he can solicit at the Private Audience.”

“Ah!” I exclaimed as, emerging from a thicket, which intercepted our view of the cottage, we at length came within a few yards of it, “ah, I see too plainly that these poor creatures are ignorant or indifferent about the true means of procuring happiness. They do not often visit the Public Court, and still less frequently, if at all, seek their PRINCE at his Private Audience!” It was not without sufficient cause that I used these expressions. The cottage which, at a distance, excited in my mind so many pleasing anticipations, was found, on a nearer view, to be in a most dilapidated and filthy condition. Several broken squares in the casement were stopped up with rags, the wood-bine and rose trees in front were fallen to the ground, for want of nailing them to the wall. It was difficult to approach the door, owing to an accumulation of filth

which lay near it, and in the pathway were several excavations, probably made by the pigs, filled with mud and water. In the little garden, where weeds and rubbish almost concealed the few sickly vegetables that it contained, a group of half-naked, dirty children were quarrelling and fighting with each other. Their mother, on seeing us approach, came out and endeavoured to put an end to the clamour; but the children paid no regard to her words. She then angrily struck at the most noisy amongst them; and being aggravated by their obstinate perseverance in the contest, she dealt her blows on every side with undistinguishing fury.

Such was the picture which was presented to my view at a time when I was indulging in the most pleasing expectations! I had no desire to remain in such a place. "Come," said I to my guide, "let us leave this dwelling of the slothful." "Stay one moment," he replied: and advancing towards the woman, he inquired what could be the cause of their living in so uncomfortable a state. She muttered something about her poverty, and the little earnings which her husband made by his daily labour. "But these children," said

the old man, "are old enough to do something for their livelihood : would it not be better to employ them in useful labour than to allow them to pass their time in idleness and quarrelling?" "They are fit for nothing," replied the woman, casting a look of reproach towards them, "no one will employ them—all they live for is to make me uncomfortable." "But why," said I, "don't you take them to the PRINCE'S Courts where they may learn their duty?" "How can I take them," she answered, "in that ragged state—no, no; poor folks have enough to do to get a living, and cannot be expected to make themselves fit to go to Court." "You might take them there," replied my Conductor, "though they were clothed in rags, provided you made them as neat and decent as was in your power." "I have no time for such things," replied the woman sulkily, and she retired into her miserable hut, as if offended at our remarks. "Well," said my Guide, "what think you now of this *happy* Valley?" "I have no patience," I replied, "with this perverseness. It is evidently true, as you told me, that the inhabitants are wretched solely by their own fault." "The occupier of yon cottage," said

my Companion, "is not an idle man—he works hard enough, but he has no prudence or management. He has neither checked the extravagance of his wife, nor taught his children habits of industry. His house is, in consequence, most comfortless to him, and he avoids coming there as often as he can. This renders his partner morose and ill-tempered. She is always complaining of her wretched condition, and at her husband, for leaving her so much alone. She does not see that this is principally her own fault. For as she takes no pains to make his home desirable, it is not surprising that he is disposed to seek for comfort elsewhere. The children are disobedient, unruly, idle, and constant sources of vexation to their parents: yet, as I before said, all these evils are of their own creating, or, at least, greatly aggravated by their own folly and negligence. Had they both sought their gracious PRINCE, privately and publicly, and sincerely endeavoured to profit by the instructions that would have been communicated to them, their condition would have been very different. The house would have been decent and comfortable, and the husband not only would have deemed it a duty, but

have felt it a delight, to spend his leisure hours at home, instead of going abroad for amusement. His children, being then more frequently under his own eye and control, might have learnt industrious habits: and the instructions he would have heard at the Public Court, might have led him to teach them how to behave both to their parents and to each other, and also the duty which they owed to their PRINCE. It is indeed impossible to number the benefits which flow from a regular and sincere attendance on the Courts of Audience. The cessation from labour which they enjoy at those times, does not render them idle afterwards; but on the contrary, it gives them fresh vigour to pursue their appointed work; especially as they are faithfully warned by the servants of the PRINCE, that their attendance on him cannot be admitted as any plea for neglecting their lawful employments. There is a time for both.* It makes them cheerful and contented. Under provocation they become patient and forbearing; and if misfortunes befall them, they endure them without repining. They are taught to be affectionate in their families, friendly with their neighbours, kind

* Rom. xii. 11. 2 Thes. iii. 10. Exod. xx. 9, 10.

and peaceable towards all. But for their negligence in this respect, yonder poor family might have realized the expectations you had formed, on first seeing their cottage. The husband would have loved his wife: the wife would have been submissive to her husband; the children obedient to their parents, and united in the bonds of affection and friendship with each other.”* “How strange it is,” I observed, “that these wretched people, seeing, as they cannot avoid seeing, the evil consequences of neglecting to seek the favour of the PRINCE, do not resolve to attend the appointed means of obtaining it.” “The fact is,” answered my Guide, “they are too blind to see that this neglect is the cause of their discomfort, or if they do see it, they have not resolution to apply the remedy. For nothing is more common than for the inhabitants of this Valley to confess, that such and such a course is very proper—would lead to good consequences, and make them happy, and then directly to start off in an opposite direction.” “How preposterous is such conduct!” I replied, “is it possible that they can be in their right mind to act in this way?” “I

* Eph. v. 22, 25. vi. 1—3. Psa. cxxxiii. 1.

cannot say," he replied, "that they are absolutely without understanding, but their intellects are certainly very much darkened, in regard to those things which concern their best interests. They are shrewd and sensible enough in inferior matters, but on subjects of paramount importance to their happiness, too many of them seem indeed out of their minds.* And though the PRINCE has given them a sure standard by which all things may be tried and examined, and their qualities accurately discerned, and though he has warned them not to trust to their own imperfect understanding, yet they seldom have recourse to this infallible test.† Hence you may frequently see them stoutly contending, that white is black ; bitter, sweet ; darkness, light, and other absurdities. This is owing to a disease which their common Ancestor transmitted to all his posterity. He brought it upon himself by eating some fruit from a very dangerous tree, though he had been particularly cautioned against it, and commanded, on pain of death, not to eat of the fruit. Had he been in want of food, some excuse might have been found for his conduct.

* Eph. iv. 18.

† Isa. viii. 20. Prov. iii. 5. Isa. v. 20.

But this was not the case. He had a beautiful garden, abounding with delicious fruits, and had full permission to take from all but the one in question. Yet, because an Enemy of the Prince told him that the fruit would make him wise, and that his transgression of the command would not subject him to death, he rashly ventured to eat some of the fruit. He was instantly attacked by a fatal disease which ultimately destroyed his life.* It has the same mortal effect on all his descendants; for they all perish by it sooner or later. One consequence of this disease is, that perverseness of understanding which I have just noticed. Hence they generally prefer what is evil, though, as in the case of their ancestor, an abundance of good things is offered to their choice.”†

“How miserable,” I exclaimed, “must be their condition, subject as they are to an incurable and fatal malady! but surely, they are deserving of our pity, though they do act most foolishly, since their strange conduct is owing to disease. If this is constantly affecting their sight, and giving them a false view

* Rom. v. 12.

† Deut. xxx. 15—20. John iii. 36. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

of things, how can we blame them for choosing evil, since they cannot discern what is good?" "Your objection," he replied, "would be well-founded, *had they no remedy for their disease*, and no means of gaining knowledge. But both are provided for them by the kindness and foresight of their gracious PRINCE. Of the remedy I will speak another time; as to the means of gaining knowledge, these I have already pointed out to you, namely, the Courts of Public and Private Audience. There light may be communicated to their understandings, the film taken from their eyes, and the highest wisdom be imparted to them."*

He was interrupted at this moment by cries for help. The old man instantly turned towards the place whence they arose, and advanced with hasty steps. I hastened after him, anxious to render all the assistance in my power. We soon arrived at the brink of a deep river. Being confined within a narrow channel, by lofty and projecting rocks, it rushed downwards with tremendous force for several hundred yards, until its waters were lost in a vast lake, whose limits could not be discerned. In the midst of the torrent we

* Heb. iv. 16. Job xxviii, 28.

perceived a man floating, and struggling to keep his head above water. His cries were now very feeble, and his strength almost exhausted by the violence of his efforts to save himself. "Take courage," exclaimed my Guide, "help is at hand." Then running to a rock which projected far into the stream, and breaking a large branch from a tree that grew on the brink, he calmly waited till the poor man was borne towards him. This soon happened, owing to the rapidity of the torrent. The branch was instantly held out to him as he was hurried along. He fortunately seized hold of the extremity, and grasped it with all the eagerness and retentiveness of a drowning man. Though dashed repeatedly against the rock, by the force of the waters, he still maintained his hold, and was speedily extricated from his perilous situation.

After fervently thanking his deliverer for the timely assistance which he had rendered him, he told us the cause of his misfortune. He was sailing on the river, a considerable distance above the rapids, in a boat laden with white and yellow dust, and had, by some means or other, diverged from the only safe course, and fallen into the current which leads to these

dangerous rapids. When he discovered his danger he did all in his power to bring his vessel back into a secure part of the river, but all his exertions were vain. The torrent was so violent, that he could not steer his frail bark any longer. It struck on one of those rocky promontories, which are so numerous about this part of the river, and his vessel was instantly broken in pieces, his cargo sunk, and himself thrown into the midst of the rapid current, from which he had just been extricated. "But how," asked the old man, "could you have forgotten those dangerous parts of the river? They have been often pointed out, and landmarks are erected to warn all mariners to avoid this danger." "Alas, Sir," he replied, "I was so intent on the cargo which I had obtained by long and perilous labours, and so eager to arrive at my destination, that I ventured into a current that appeared to run in the direction of my home, and I hoped by this means to arrive there sooner, and I found, when too late to remedy my mistake, that it led into those fatal rapids where my vessel was dashed to pieces, and myself placed in imminent danger of perishing." "Let this be a warning to you in future," replied his deliverer, "not to neglect

the directions which are given to those who embark on this dangerous stream; and do not hope for a successful termination of your voyage, unless you frequently consult the chart which your beneficent PRINCE has had made for the use of his subjects. It is only by a diligent attention to this valuable guide, and by never losing sight of the polar star, that you can possibly avoid the rocks, and quicksands, and whirlpools, which are scattered in every direction, and be enabled to steer in safety to the desired haven.”* The stranger thanked my venerable Guide for his counsel, and, after receiving some relief for present necessities, departed to his own home.

“This event,” resumed my Companion, “affords an answer to your question—how can those who are naturally prone to evil choose what is good? This poor man, you observe, was under the influence of the delusion which affects so many of the inhabitants of this valley. Believing that happiness consisted in an accumulation of the so much-desired dust, he had scraped a large quantity together, had embarked in a vessel with his acquisitions, and was hastening home to enjoy the fruit of his labours; but

* Psa. cxix. 105. Mat. ii. 2.

his thoughts were so occupied about these things, as he confessed to us, that he neglected the caution and circumspection which are so needful to all navigators on this river, to prevent them from shipwreck. The result was such as might be expected, and such as has been the fate of thousands. He lost in a moment what he valued so highly, and what he was in such haste to enjoy, and was in imminent peril of losing his life. He then saw his danger, and *only* his danger: fond as he was of the dust that had been swallowed up by the waters, he no longer thought of it: the fear of losing his life absorbed every other care, and how to escape from the present danger was his chief concern. Hence, when I held the branch towards him, he readily seized it, clung firmly to it, and by this means he was delivered from his dangerous situation. It is in a somewhat similar way that the inhabitants of the Valley, great as is their propensity to evil, are brought to choose better things. Though the disease, which they all bring into the world with them,* is of so insidious and flattering a nature, that its victims generally believe themselves to be in perfect health, when they are even at the gates of death, yet are

* Psalm li. 5.

many of them led in various ways to a sense of their danger. The eyes of some are opened by means of losses, and afflictions. Others are made sensible of their unsound condition by the representations and warnings of the KING's Physicians. Others, by seeing or hearing that some of their fellow-subjects, whom they had considered in good health, had suddenly fallen victims to the power of death: and multitudes are led to a knowledge of the evil disease which is consuming their life, by hearing the PRINCE's servants in the Public Courts describe the rise, progress, and destructive effects of this fatal malady. And when they are fully sensible of the existence of the disease in themselves, they are alarmed at their danger, anxiously seek for a remedy, and gladly embrace it when offered. They feel themselves, as did the poor man whom we have just rescued, fast sinking into destruction, and, therefore, when the means of deliverance are brought within their reach, they gladly stretch out their hands, and cling tenaciously, to the hope set before them. In their desperate circumstances neither the dust, which before so much engaged their attention, any longer blinds their eyes, nor the glittering bubbles which they lately pursued, nor the

possessions in which they delighted, have any charms for them; for their thoughts are now entirely occupied about their dangerous state—‘How shall we escape?’ is their anxious enquiry—‘What shall we do to be saved from the fate which impends over us?’ ”*

“And what,” I asked my venerable Guide, “what is this valuable remedy which is able to cure the fatal disease of these poor people?” “I will satisfy your curiosity presently,” he answered, “but let us now proceed to some other dwellings in the Valley.”

* Acts xvi. 30, 31.

END OF PART FIRST.

THE
VALE OF PROBATION.

A Dream.

PART SECOND.

THE VALE OF PROBATION.

PART SECOND.


They dote! on what? Immortal views apart,
A region of outsides! a land of shadows!
A fruitful field of flowery promises!
A wilderness of joys! perplexed with doubts,
And sharp with thorns! a troubled ocean, spread
With bold adventurers, their all on board;
No second hope, if here their fortune frowns!

YOUNG.

My Guide led me a considerable distance through a narrow and difficult path. The way was so rugged that I had several hair-breadth escapes from falling; and once or twice an exclamation of anger and impatience rose to my lips, but was immediately suppressed, when I saw how calmly and steadily my Companion proceeded. He perceived how much I was perplexed and fatigued, and held out his arm to assist me; but I refused his offer. In fact, I was ashamed to receive help from one, whose age and appearance induced me to suppose that he had more need than myself of assistance.

He smiled, on seeing me persist in stumbling along without the proffered help. "Such," said he, "is the confidence of inexperienced youth! It deems health and vigour the only requisites for overcoming difficulties, and it often encounters double labours, and not unfrequently fails of attaining its object, through an over-weening conceit of its own strength and ability. Labour and perseverance, it is true, will generally be crowned with success; but there is a better ground for expecting it, and disappointment and failure are much less probable, when the industrious and resolute are willing to be guided by the dictates of prudence, and are wise and humble enough to follow the counsels of experience." I was conscious that he was right, but pride and false shame prevented me from confessing my error. Nay, so desirous was I of shewing him how capable I was of pursuing without assistance my journey, difficult as it proved, that I affected to make light of the obstacles in the way. While my Companion carefully examined the rocky fragments over which we had to scramble, in order to find out the most accessible places, I exerted all my strength to leap over them. This answered my purpose very well for a time, but I

was soon taught the wisdom of the adage: "Look before you leap:" for, on attempting to spring over a large piece of rock which stood immediately in our path, and to avoid which, my Guide made a circuit of a few hundred yards, my foot struck against the ridge, and I was precipitated into a yawning gulf that was on the left side. I uttered an exclamation of terror when I found myself falling I knew not where. It proved to be a large hole or pit, containing very little water, but, fortunately for my safety, a great deal of mud. Into this I plunged headlong, and must inevitably have been smothered, had not my Companion run to the brink, and extricated me from my unpleasant situation without delay. I stood before him, unhurt indeed, but shivering with cold, and filled with shame, at the consequences of my folly and rashness. Though my appearance was ridiculous enough to have excited laughter even in a Stoic, my benevolent Guide exhibited no sign of mirth in his countenance or manner; but actively assisted me to divest my garments of the load of dirt which adhered to them. He then told me to keep up my spirits, for that we were near a house, occupied by one of his friends, who would readily accommodate me



with a change of apparel. We soon arrived at his friend's residence, and when my Guide had acquainted the master with my situation, he immediately supplied me with every thing necessary. Having washed and dressed myself, I returned to the room, where my kind host and his venerable friend were sitting, to make my acknowledgments.

Being now recovered from my fright and weariness, I was able to make my observations on the place at which we had arrived, as well as on its owner. The mansion was a very old, spacious, and commodious building. It had been built many centuries ago by the ancestor of the gentleman to whom it now belonged. There was a very large and valuable domain surrounding the richly wooded park in which it stood; and several small villages within a short distance, were seen through various avenues.

The establishment of my benevolent host was large and suitable to his immense fortune; and I was gratified at seeing the contented and cheerful countenances of his numerous domestics. They evidently loved and venerated their master, and felt it to be a privilege to serve him. Yet he was very strict in the regulations of his


household. Idleness and carelessness were sure to be severely reprov'd by him : and all his servants were aware, that he expected and required them to do whatever work was allotted to them, in the best manner. His penetrating eye seem'd to be ever upon them, so that it was extremely difficult for any of his servants or labourers to neglect, or execute improperly their work, unknown to him. But his watchfulness was not the result, nor had it the appearance, of suspicion. He was too just and generous to be suspicious. He believ'd all with whom he had dealings to be honest and upright, unless he found them unworthy of his confidence; and would never wound the feelings of the lowest individual in his employment, by shewing any distrust of his integrity, on slight grounds. But he consider'd it his duty to observe them carefully, that he might commend the diligent, reprove the slothful, and preserve order and regularity in every department. Being constantly employ'd, they were less expos'd to the temptations and dangers to which want of occupation renders persons liable. And as his requirements were always reasonable, the voice of murmuring and discontent was seldom heard. But though he was strict, he was also indulgent.

He denied them no reasonable liberty or gratification, and was ever ready to promote their happiness.

Such being his character, I was not surprised to find, that many of his servants and labourers had grown grey in his service, without the thought or wish to change their master. His interests they regarded as their own, and they would have repelled any attempt to injure him, or to destroy any portion of his property, as zealously and diligently, as if an injury were meditated against themselves. Hence his affairs were in a prosperous condition. His means of doing good were continually increasing, and his acts of benevolence kept pace with his enlarged power.

"I need not ask you," said I to my venerable Guide, "whether the possessor of this noble estate attends the PRINCE'S Courts; for it is evident that he not only hears, but practises the wise directions which are there given." "Your observation is correct;" he replied, "little, indeed, would my friend's own prudence and wisdom avail him, did he not seek for direction from his PRINCE. Of this he is quite sensible. For though he is one of the best and wisest men in the Vale, yet he is so diffident of

his abilities, and so humble-minded, that he seeks an audience of his gracious Adviser twice or thrice every day. Nor does he confine this privilege to himself. His wife, his children, and his domestics are regularly brought by him to the same Audience. He well knows that neither they nor himself can preserve their allegiance, or continue steadily in the path of duty, without receiving continual support, and frequent instructions from their unfailing Guide and Protector. And his regular appearance at the Public Court of the KING, together with his family, is not only attended with benefit to themselves, but the example which he sets to his tenants and neighbours has a most beneficial effect. So much is he respected and beloved in the neighbourhood, that many who, owing to the influence of that fatal disease to which I have already alluded, are indifferent about serving the PRINCE, and would seldom visit his Court, are induced to attend by the example of their excellent neighbour. And though a love of their gracious SOVEREIGN, and not the mere wish to imitate a good example, ought to be their motive for this proceeding, yet even in this latter case has their attendance sometimes been followed by a blessing. They have begun



to frequent the Court, because their respected neighbour and his family were habitually there; their visits have led to such a knowledge of their PRINCE as to cause a real attachment to him; and they have ultimately found so much benefit and pleasure from their attendance, that it was a pain and disappointment to them, when they could not be present on those privileged occasions. Happy, therefore, is the neighbourhood where so faithful a subject as my friend resides! The influence of such an example is felt to an extent hardly to be measured. And, I may add, happy is the man who employs the influence which rank and large possessions give him, in thus imperceptibly drawing subjects to an acquaintance with their gracious PRINCE!"

I was desirous of visiting a cottage that stood on a wood-crowned eminence, about a mile from the Park which we were now leaving. My Guide readily consenting, we set off towards the place. "You spoke of a remedy," I observed, "to the disease with which the inhabitants of the Valley are universally afflicted, can this be easily procured?" "It is offered to all;" replied my Companion, "nor are there any other obstacles in the way of its attainment, than the reluctance which the poor,

diseased creatures themselves manifest in accepting the remedy. The PRINCE wishes all to be restored to health, and has stationed Physicians in various parts of the Valléy to supply them with healing medicines, or rather, to direct them where their health may be restored." "Then I suppose that their prescriptions are very bitter and unpalatable, and this renders the people so reluctant to follow their advice." "The remedy itself," replied my Guide, "is neither bitter nor unpleasant: on the contrary, it is a most sweet and refreshing thing. It consists of a Fountain of most wonderful efficacy, in which whoever is washed he is cured of his disease.* The pollution which attached to the descendants of the first transgressor is thus removed; and he who goes to the Fountain is cleansed, the transgressions, which he had committed against his KING are pardoned, he is relieved from a heavy burden of anxiety and terror, and experiences an indescribable peace and joy."† "Then the people must be mad indeed," I exclaimed, "not to seek thankfully and eagerly this wonderful Fountain!" "Various causes," he replied,

* Zech. xiii. 1. John v. 8. Mat. viii. 3.

† 1 John i. 7. Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 20.

“contribute to prevent them from following this wise and rational course. Some of the people think that they do not labour under any disease, and have therefore no need of bathing in the Fountain.* Others fancy that they can cure themselves, and think the mode prescribed by the KING’s Physicians, very unsuitable.† There was once a most distressed object that applied to one of the royal Physicians, and requested him to cure his disease. He was directed by him to bathe in a certain river, and his desire would be accomplished. Instead of doing this, he vented his indignation on the Physician, for prescribing so easy a means of cure, and actually drove away from his door, in a paroxysm of rage! But being persuaded by his servants at least to give the prescription a trial, he at length consented. He went and bathed in the river, as he had been at first directed, and to his great astonishment, his health was restored.” “He did not deserve such a blessing,” I exclaimed, “after behaving with so much insolence to the good Physician.” “The PRINCE,” answered my Guide, “has frequently received much greater insults than this from his diseased subjects,

* Luke xviii. 11. Mat. ix. 12. † 2 Kings v. 12.

and yet he has forborne to punish, and still continued to offer them the means of recovery. It would surely, therefore, ill become any of the Physicians, his servants, to resent the bad behaviour of their patients, and to cease from their endeavours to do them good.

I have told you that some of these diseased creatures, notwithstanding their total helplessness, fancy that they are able to cure themselves. Many as are their infirmities, and rapidly as they are sinking under the effect of a malady which becomes incurable, unless the infallible prescriptions of the PRINCE are followed, they are too proud to stoop to such means! They, therefore, devise other methods which, they persuade themselves, will speedily effect a cure." "But surely," I said, "the prescriptions which the Physicians direct to be taken, are too expensive to be within the reach of most of the poor diseased creatures, and it is probably on this account that they seek other means of deliverance from their maladies." "On the contrary," answered my Companion, "the remedy is so cheap, that both rich and poor are too apt to despise it.* All classes of the sick are, in fact, generally desirous of the

* Isa. lv. 1. John vii. 37.

honour and credit of curing their own disorders, and seem to consider it an affront to be offered a free and gratuitous remedy. Hence have many of them recourse to the most painful, laborious, and expensive applications, as if in direct opposition to the easy, simple, and cheap medicine provided by the PRINCE. Some foolish creatures will walk hundreds of miles to a particular place, as if they thought that the exercise would drive away their ailments, or that their labours would recommend them to the royal favour. Others will shut themselves up in a kind of prison, occupy a miserable cell, with nothing but straw for their bed, live upon little else than bread and water, and, in addition to these privations, will whip and scourge their bodies in the severest manner." "It is most singular," I said, "that they should take all this trouble, and endure so many sufferings in the hope of pleasing the PRINCE, when they must know that he would be better pleased to see them obedient to his commands, and willing to follow his directions,"* "They are so blind and infatuated," replied my venerable Guide, "as to fancy that they are acting agreeably to his will, when they

* 1 Sam. xv. 22. Hosea vi. 6.

are following only the dictates of their own pride, and gratifying their self-will. And unfortunately there are too many false and deceiving men, who call themselves Physicians, who aggravate the maladies of the people by their erroneous mode of treatment.* They are not sent by the PRINCE, and consequently have no authority for what they do; and yet they boast of their commission from him, and of their great and supernatural powers over diseases,† and by their confidence and assurance, they induce many credulous people to put themselves under their care.‡ But they invariably deceive them,|| and persuade them that they are well, when it is evident to all whose eyes are open, that they are in a miserable condition.§ It is partly owing to the pernicious counsel of these unskilful practitioners, and partly to the natural pride of the sick, which is much flattered by the notion of their being able to effect their own recovery, that so many and various medicines are taken, and all of them considered by the deluded patients, as infallible specifics.” “How melancholy and pitiable is their condition,” I exclaimed, “to

* 1 Tim. iv. 1—4.

† 2 Thes. ii. 4, 9.

‡ 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

|| Jer. vi. 14.

§ Isa. i. 6.

be the dupes of these ignorant and presumptuous impostors ! Surely the PRINCE cannot know of the evil practices of these enemies of his subjects, or he would banish them from the Valley." "He knows all these things very well;" replied my Companion, "but for wise and good reasons he allows these pretenders to remain in the country, and leaves his subjects, in a great measure, to exercise their own discretion. They are rational creatures, and if they will not make use of their reason, but submit to be led blindfold into dangers and difficulties, the fault is their own. This is THE VALE OF PROBATION: here they are in a state of trial. Good and evil must necessarily exist together for a period: but the people are furnished with the means of discerning the one from the other, and have also great aids and inducements afforded them, to lead them to a right choice. So that these false Physicians could not easily deceive them, were the people to avail themselves of the helps which are offered to them, and were they humble enough to ask advice and direction of the PRINCE, and to consult the GREAT BOOK of instructions which he has caused to be circulated among them. But, as I have before observed, it is so

agreeable to their proud nature to believe that they can obtain health by their own skill and exertions, that they ~~are~~ much more willing to listen to these Physicians who flatter their prejudices and indulge their self-conceit, than to those who faithfully tell them in what a sad condition they are, and point out to them the only remedy for their disease.* This foolish notion renders them unwilling to seek counsel, even from their gracious KING: and as to THE BOOK, in which the true prescriptions are clearly and intelligibly written, either they do not consult it at all, or else they overlook all those passages which point out to them their disease and its remedy, and fix their attention only on some obscure places which, by the help of prejudice and fancy, they contrive to interpret in accordance with their previous opinions. Hence they do not read THE BOOK, in order to know what is the pleasure of the PRINCE, and what they must do to shew their love and reverence for his person and laws, but that they may establish the correctness of their pre-conceived notions. The consequences of this posterous conduct are deplorable. The true Fountain of health is despised and neglected;

* Isa. xxx. 10.

and inventions the most ridiculous, and means the most unlikely, in the eyes of wisdom and prudence to afford benefit, are employed in order to procure them a temporary and delusive tranquillity.* They readily listen to the deceiving tales, and soothing language of the false Physicians, whose prescriptions are the very reverse of those contained in the GREAT BOOK, and thus too often become victims to their own vanity, folly, and credulity.† And while they are disobeying the commands of the PRINCE, wandering from their allegiance, and distrusting his royal promises, they still call themselves good subjects! Although they refuse the *uniform*, which he bestows upon those who are ranged under his banner, and appear in their ordinary dress, yet have they the presumption to assert, that they are his soldiers and servants! Yet have they plainly been told that none can be so considered, nor be admitted into his presence, who are not clothed in the dress which he hath prepared for them.‡ So satisfied, however, are they with the scanty raiment with which they clothe themselves, that they will pass hours, and days, and weeks, in contemplat-

* Jer. ii. 13.

+ Mat. xv. 9, 14.

‡ Mat. xxii. 11, 12. Isa. lxi. 10.

ing themselves in their glass with much self-complacency; but this dress, which they so greatly admire, when examined by the faithful servants of the **PRINCE** (who can easily discern what is gold and what tinsel) is found to be nothing but filthy rags.* Yet while in this miserable attire will these blind and diseased creatures go about boasting of their health, and vigour, and comeliness!"†

"It is unnecessary to ask you if these madmen ever attend the Public Audience of their **PRINCE**, for their absurd conduct at once precludes me from supposing, that they follow so wise a course." "There you are mistaken," replied the old man, "many of these people will be found regularly in their places at the Public Courts on the appointed days. They will appear to be most attentive to the message which the servants of the **PRINCE**, on such occasions, deliver to them: they will often be loud in the praise and commendation of their **SOVEREIGN**, and make use of very humble and appropriate language in their addresses to him; and yet they derive no benefit from their regular attendance upon him, but remain under their strange delusions." "Then their failure in

* Isa. lxiv. 6.

† Rev. iii. 17.

obtaining the favour of the PRINCE, must be owing to their neglect in not first seeking his advice and assistance privately, for I think you said, that the inhabitants of the Valley were not likely to derive benefit by their appearance at Court, unless they frequently applied at the Private Audience for advice and direction.” “Yes, I stated as much: but the neglect of this important service is by no means the only cause of losing the PRINCE’s favour: for some of these people are as regularly at the Private, as they are at the Public Audience, and yet their requests are denied.” “I begin to think,” I replied, “that their SOVEREIGN cannot be so kind and gracious as has been represented, or surely this obedience to his ordinance, on the part of these well-meaning, though perhaps mistaken people, would meet with a better return.” “On the contrary,” answered my venerable Guide, “I have not said half enough in commendation of this excellent Ruler. His love to his subjects, his condescension, his patience and forbearance, his readiness to pardon, his unwillingness to punish, his delight in granting favours, his compassion for the afflicted, his pity for the erring, it is impossible for me to describe in adequate terms. Be assured, there-

fore, that when any of his subjects fail in their attempts to gain his favour, the fault is entirely in themselves. It often happens that, when they solicit his advice and assistance, they ask it in a cold, formal manner, as if they were totally indifferent whether their requests were granted or not. This is a bad preparation for their attendance at Court. In fact, the same carelessness which they manifest at home attends them in public. A person unacquainted with their character might, indeed, on hearing their earnest entreaties for pardon of the many offences they had committed against their kind PRINCE, consider them as deeply humbled: and, on listening to their expressions of praise and thankfulness for the bounties received at his hands, he might feel no less persuaded of their affection and gratitude: but he would find, on examination, that these expressions were too often mere words of course, certain Court-forms to which the utterers attached no particular meaning,* though they highly value themselves on regularly using them. Some of them, while actually supplicating for a remedy to the sad disease under which they are (according to their own confession) sinking, are all the

* Mat. v. 20.

time looking at the filthy garments with which they have decked themselves as their certain cure.* And many, who seem to pay great respect and attention to the words of instruction, read by the PRINCE's servants out of the BOOK of royal ordinances, are often thinking of other subjects, so that the voice of the Instructor is exerted in vain. If they *do* hear what is said, little impression is made upon their minds, because they are full of so many other things. And when they leave the Court, they too frequently leave behind them all their good resolutions, all their professions of love for the PRINCE, all those principles which ought to actuate their conduct elsewhere, as if they were of no use to them, except on the appointed days. Such persons appear to consider the Courts of Audience not as affording the means of procuring certain abiding benefits, but as a theatre in which each may assume a character for a season, and which he may cast away, or take up an opposite one, as soon as he departs. They hear good things, they pay the same external homage to the PRINCE, which they see his faithful subjects offer, they scrupulously follow the prescribed forms and ceremonies of

* Rom. x. 3.


the Court, but unfortunately, they go no further. They enter into the way without pursuing it to the end. They are like persons who should go to a well for water, but who, on arriving at the place, should content themselves with looking on the buckets, ropes, and other conveniences for drawing it out of the well, and then return without drinking." "They would not be so foolish," I replied, "if they were thirsty." "True:" said my Guide, "and this is the very cause why many who frequently visit the Public Court, receive no advantage. The PRINCE will not confer his best gifts on those who fancy themselves rich enough without them —on those who neither know, nor feel their poverty.* But here is the cottage which you desired to see."

Saying these words, my venerable Guide took my arm, and we walked together into the little garden which surrounded the neat abode of a poor labourer. He sat at his door: his right leg rested on a stool, and a pair of crutches were within his reach. Though he was unable to rise up to receive us, he welcomed our approach, by exhibiting a cheerful and joyous countenance. "I am glad to see you so much

* Luke i. 53.

better, John," said my Companion, kindly addressing him, "your hurt was a severe one, and I scarcely expected that you would have been able to leave your bed so soon." "Nor should I, Sir," replied the poor man, "had I not had the best nurse, the best friends, and the best doctor in the world. Ah, Sir, when I consider how much kindness and attention I have received since the accident happened, I can hardly be sorry that my leg was broken, and in thinking on the compassion and benevolence of my benefactors, I quite forget the pain that I have endured. Master so often visits me, and is so feeling, that you might suppose that he had also had a broken leg. And sometimes one, sometimes another of his kind family pays me a visit; and they talk to me, and read to me, and do so much for me, that I have had hardly one tiresome hour since I was brought home. I feel, indeed, a regret and uneasiness on one account, and that is, that I can no longer attend the Public Court of our gracious PRINCE. This is such a high and delightful privilege, and I receive so much comfort and pleasure every time I go, that I should like very well to be carried there in my present state, if the distance were not too great. Oh

how thankful shall I be, when my leg is well enough to allow me again to attend! How pleasant will it be again to hear the advice and instruction of the KING's servants, and to join in thanking and praising his great and glorious Majesty!" "Well, my friend," replied my Companion, "though you cannot attend the Public Court, you are still able to seek the PRINCE in private, and I doubt not this is one of your highest enjoyments during your present confinement." "It is, Sir," replied the man, "it is at all times an enjoyment to me: and I am often lost in wonder, when I think of the condescension of the PRINCE, in allowing so poor and lowly a creature as I, who have again and again broken his laws, and forgotten his goodness, to come to him at any time for advice and consolation. I find him most faithful to his promises, and that I never apply to him in vain. I do not mean to say that my bountiful PRINCE always grants my wishes; no, were he to do so, I should not be half so happy as I am. For many things which I sometimes greatly desired, and begged hard to have given to me, I found afterwards would have been rather a hurt than an advantage to me. He, however, always sends me away quite confident, that




whether my petition be granted or refused, it will all be for the best. Ah, Sir, it is a happy thing for us poor, ignorant creatures, that we have so wise and kind a PRINCE to determine what shall be given to us. How often should we make a wrong choice ! How often would those very requests, in the fulfilment of which we fancy our best interests and happiness to consist, if complied with, overwhelm us with anxiety and sorrow ! How many dangers we avoid, by casting all our cares and concerns into the hands of our gracious PRINCE, and leaving him to determine what portion of good or evil, of sorrow or joy, is most suitable to our condition !” “Did you always hold these sentiments ?” inquired my Companion. “No, Sir,” replied the man, “before I came to work for my present kind master, I lived without ever thinking or caring about our PRINCE, and was always dissatisfied and complaining. As to his Public Court, I did, indeed, sometimes visit it, but it was in a careless and irreverent manner, and, of course, I received no good from my attendance. The things which I heard there sometimes made me feel dejected and unhappy ; and as this served to confirm a foolish opinion I had formed respecting people

who regularly visited the Courts of the PRINCE—namely, that they were gloomy and melancholy beings, I resolved to keep away from such places and such company. I associated with none but merry and good-humoured persons. I ought rather to say, with persons who were *outwardly* so; for I soon found that their smiles and laughter, and good-nature, were all put on—that they were often quarrelling with each other, cheating and deceiving, slandering and back-biting one another without mercy; and that many of them were so selfish and unfeeling, as to spend almost all their wages on their own riotous enjoyments, while their wives and children were starving at home. These things made me reflect a little: though I liked the company of these men, I did not much relish their conduct, especially towards their families; for I loved my wife and children too well to endure to see them want and suffer, through my idleness or wastefulness. They *did* not want, though they were not so decently clothed, nor did they enjoy so many comforts as they do now, for I spent all that was not absolutely necessary to the support of my family, with those unworthy associates.” “Was your home then a happy one,” my Guide

asked, "since you were not quite so bad as many of your acquaintances?" "It was tolerably comfortable;" replied the man, "for my wife was always an excellent manager, and did all she could to make me love my home; but I cannot say I was happy. My children were very unruly, and had companions who were still worse, and I knew not how to manage them. I scolded them, and punished them often enough, but what good could that do, so long as I set them so bad an example? At last I met with employment under my present master, and came to reside in this cottage. I shall ever consider this one of the happiest events in my life. My master, I found, regularly attended the Public Courts, and, out of respect to him, I went also. Further acquaintance with his character, caused me to admire and love him. His benevolence, his mildness, his condescension, and above all, his *cheerfulness* quite won my affections. I then saw that people might be very attentive and faithful to their PRINCE, and yet not necessarily be gloomy or morose. His family resembled himself. Both his children and his servants appeared always cheerful and happy. The more I saw and considered, the more I perceived what an

unjust and mistaken opinion I had entertained of the character and disposition of the KING's best subjects. I was then convinced that, instead of ascribing gloom and melancholy to *them*, it was to myself and my companions that these terms ought to be applied ; and that the more those neglected and despised Courts were frequented, the more satisfaction and delight would be experienced. From that time I attended regularly at the Public Court, with all my family, whenever we had the opportunity, and have never had reason to regret my determination. My children have, in general, been dutiful and obedient, and are most of them now occupying respectable situations, and endeavouring honestly and diligently to do their duty to their KING, their neighbours, and themselves. And I have learnt, that to bring up children to love and reverence their gracious SOVEREIGN, and to frequent the Courts of Audience, both public and private, is the surest way to make them obedient and kind to their parents, and useful members of society." At this moment the Doctor came to examine his patient: we, therefore, took our leave of this honest and respectable man, and proceeded to make some other visits.



My Companion made no remarks on the conversation which I had just heard, but left me to my own reflections. I began to discover the truth of his former observation, namely, that the uneasiness, care, discontent, and sorrow which so generally prevailed among the inhabitants of the Vale, were in a great measure owing to themselves. Means were abundantly supplied, by which they were enabled to obtain as much enjoyment as was consistent with their present state of trial; but they were too much disposed to neglect them, and to invent and try other modes of acquiring happiness, far more laborious, and far less efficacious, than those appointed for them. They were, however, pursuing *their own devices*, and this was soothing to their pride, though very far from realizing their hopes. Happiness fled from their grasp, and disappointment and sorrow were most commonly the only fruits of their arduous exertions. But when a person was willing to believe that his gracious PRINCE was wiser than himself, and was, in consequence, ready to do what he had prescribed for rendering him happy, though he might not quite perceive the wisdom and utility of the appointed means, he was always, I found, sooner or later convinced

of their efficacy. The directions of the PRINCE when faithfully pursued were, in fact, never known to fail.* And one of the greatest and wisest men that ever lived in the Vale declared, that those who gave themselves unreservedly to the guidance of their great RULER, had never any reason to repent of their confidence in him.† They were not, however, exempt from troubles and afflictions, any more than the other inhabitants of the Valley; but their minds were rendered tranquil, while they were in the midst of them. Though clouds and thick darkness might surround them, they were not dismayed, for they knew where to look for the Sun, whose rising should dispel the darkness, and bring them light and joy.‡

“See!” cried my Companion, interrupting the meditation into which I had fallen, “There is a man who has long believed that he had found the way to happiness. He has for many years pursued it, without ever thinking or caring about the counsel of the PRINCE, and is now the victim of the deceitfulness of riches.” I looked forward, and beheld an

* 1 Pet. i. 25. † Psa. lxii. 5—8. xxii. 4, 5.

‡ Isa. xxvi. 3. Mal. iv. 2.

elderly gentleman walking with rapid steps along a terrace, in front of a large house that stood opposite our path. He appeared to be totally absorbed by his cares, and looked with a vacant eye on the varied and beautiful scenery which lay before him. "He is now," resumed my Guide, "in the greatest distress, owing to the failure of a speculation, on which all his skill had been expended, and every precaution taken to prevent defeat. Had it succeeded, he would have been one of the richest men in the Valley. His whole heart was, therefore, fixed upon the issue of it. His dreams, no less than his waking thoughts, were upon this favourite scheme. It has failed, however, in consequence of circumstances which he could neither foresee nor guard against; and he is now, comparatively speaking, a poor, destitute creature. The wreck of his fortune would indeed be sufficient to supply all his real wants; but he has been so long accustomed to think that he cannot live except in the midst of abundance, that he will probably lose either his life, or his senses, by this sudden change in his prospects. See, how he wrings his hands! What despairing looks he casts around! How he mutters to

himself unconnected and unintelligible expressions ! The idol which he worshipped is fled, and he is left to wretchedness and despair."

"Poor man!" I exclaimed, regarding him with mingled sensations of pity and horror, "should we not do well to recommend him to make immediate application to the PRINCE for advice and assistance? Do you think that, under such deplorable circumstances, his request would be refused?" "The PRINCE," answered my Guide, "never refuses the proper requests of any humble and sincere petitioner. Though the subject may forget his duty, transgress the Laws, and say by his conduct, 'I will not have this man to reign over me,' yet when he sees his ingratitude and folly, and is sorry and ashamed of himself, and is truly disposed to return to his allegiance, our gracious SOVEREIGN is most ready to pardon, to cheer, and assist his afflicted subject.* But I doubt whether yon unhappy man is either humble or contrite. He is dispirited with the loss of his possessions I grant: that he is sincere in his grief there can be no question; but I am afraid he has no sorrow for having so long neglected his gracious and forbearing SOVE-

* Neh. ix. 17. Psal. xxxiv. 18.

REIGN—so long despised the means of obtaining and maintaining the royal favour which have been offered to him, no less than to the other inhabitants of the Vale. Alas! it is to be feared that his affliction is not on account of the loss of his **PRINCE**'s favour, and for his numerous transgressions of the Law, but is solely of a selfish nature. His pride is wounded, but not destroyed. He is cast down, but not humbled. He despairs of help, instead of trusting to the **PRINCE**'s clemency, and believing his royal word. His sorrow, therefore, can lead to no beneficial consequence."*

My Companion was prevented making any further observations, by the approach of a labourer, who was returning from his work in the grounds of the unhappy gentleman in question. He had a spade and mattock on his shoulder, and was walking slowly along, and talking to himself, and seemed much fatigued and dejected. We were concealed from his view, by some bushes that grew near the path where we were standing. As his soliloquy was uttered in rather a loud tone, we soon ascertained the cause of his dejection.

"And for this miserable pittance," muttered

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

the man, "I have been labouring hard a whole week! What a lot is mine, to be obliged thus to toil with scarcely any intermission, that I may get a bare subsistence! Oh, if I had but a very small share of the possessions around me, how happy might I be! I could then take my ease, indulge in a little pleasure, and go on comfortably to the end of life!"

After he had got out of sight and hearing, my venerable Guide observed: "This man is, as you see, the victim of discontent. He is always repining at the condition in which the wisdom of the GREAT RULER hath placed him. His mind is continually tormented by the covetous desire of things which he will never obtain, and he sighs to be indulged with rest from his daily labours—an indulgence which, were he to obtain it, would only tend to make him more wretched. He is in possession of health and strength, has constant employment and good wages, and might, therefore, be very comfortable; but he has unfortunately imbibed the same foolish and hurtful notion which has been the ruin of his master, namely, that happiness is to be found only in abundance. Hence, instead of enjoying the blessings within his reach, he is always coveting what is far off,

and not likely to be granted to him; and is constantly murmuring because he must follow those daily toils which materially conduce to his present robust health, and enable him to enjoy those periods which are granted for rest and relaxation. Those intervals frequently occur, and yet he complains that he has not sufficient rest. It is not, however, rest that he desires, but sloth and inactivity. And were his wishes granted, he would find a curse instead of a blessing.

Contrast his condition with that of the labourer whom we have just visited. The latter is incapacitated from labour, weak and feeble in consequence of long confinement, and would be delighted to follow his usual occupations, though he does not murmur at his present condition, which he neither brought on himself, nor can remedy. The other is strong, vigorous, and healthy, and yet is unhappy, because he is obliged to exert his energies to his own advantage! You will be at no loss how to account for this difference in their conduct.” “No,” I replied, “it is evident that this poor man knows nothing of his gracious SOVEREIGN, will not visit his Courts, nor seek instruction from the KING’s servants, and is, therefore, the

victim of ignorance, folly, and self-delusion." "You see also," observed my Guide, "the force of example. This man has imperceptibly acquired the same habit as his master. He forms a false estimate of things, depreciating what is intrinsically valuable, and over-valuing what is intrinsically worthless. Like his employer, he is continually dreaming of wealth, and murmuring that his unreasonable expectations are not realized. He seldom visits the Public Courts, because he has learnt from his master, to despise those ordinances. He can read, and his cottage has been supplied with one of those Books of directions, which is the greatest treasure that was ever bestowed on the inhabitants of the Valley, but he derives no good from it. It is seldom that he looks into it; and when he does read a little, he reads without understanding its contents, because he will not seek the aid of an infallible Teacher, which the PRINCE willingly sends to those subjects who truly desire his assistance.* His mind is so intent on other things that, while his eye glances over pages fraught with consolation, peace, and joy to him who searches them in a right way, he derives no benefit from

* John xiv, 26. xvi: 13. Luke xi, 13.

the sight. He soon grows weary of so irksome and disagreeable an employment—disagreeable, because he does not heartily engage in it—and closes the **BOOK** without either desiring or endeavouring to regulate his conduct by its directions. And yet, little as he values or uses this **BOOK**, he has been heard to tell the servants of the **PRINCE**, who were remonstrating with him on his neglect of the Public Courts, that so long as he had this guide in his house, he saw no need of attending those places. He seems not to have observed, that they who love that **BOOK** the most, are remarkable for their regular and cheerful attendance at the Courts. And this is the uniform result of a right understanding of its contents. For excellent as are its maxims, unerring its wisdom, and clear its directions; it is not intended to supersede the established ordinances of the **PRINCE**, but rather to recommend and enforce attention to them. And though the whole of its pages should be committed to memory, a man would not be in the least degree benefitted, by having even such a store of knowledge in his head, if it did not descend into his heart, and produce a sincere love for the **PRINCE**, and as a necessary consequence, a ready and willing obedience to his commands.”

We now entered a broad and unobstructed way which led to a large village. Many persons were walking hastily along, and some running as fast as they could towards a large house. This was the residence of a magistrate. We soon learnt the reason why so many people were assembling. A young man had just been apprehended, under the accusation of having committed a robbery. It was stated, that he had broken into a house on the previous night, and after cruelly beating and almost murdering the two unfortunate inmates, who were both very old and incapable of resistance, he had plundered them of every thing of value which they possessed. An alarm, however, having been given, he was immediately pursued by several active villagers, and was taken near his father's cottage. His pursuers found him in a small plantation, where he was endeavouring to conceal the booty which he had brought away. This was seized, and produced in evidence against the culprit.

On hearing these particulars, I requested my Guide to go with me to the magistrate's house, in order to see the result of this affair. He complied with my wishes, and we entered a large room where several persons were assembled.

We were not, however, in time to hear the examination : for the evidence was so satisfactory, that the magistrate had little else to do than to commit the robber to prison. The wretched offender sat on a bench in the midst of the room, with manacles and fetters on his wrists and ancles, awaiting the arrival of the officers of justice, who were coming to take him to his ignominious abode. It was thought that his life would be forfeited to the offended laws of his country, as such crimes as his were rarely visited with a lighter punishment.

"Unhappy youth," said my Companion, approaching him, "what could have induced you to follow such an evil and desperate course of life?" "Idleness," he replied, "profaneness, bad company, and wicked examples—there," he added, in a tone of bitterness and reproach, as an old man, whom I immediately recognized as the discontented labourer that we had lately met, entered the room in deep affliction—"there you may see the cause of my ruin!" "Oh Tom, Tom!" cried the miserable father, "what a disgrace hast thou brought upon us all. Thou hast ruined thyself, and made me and all thy family infamous!" "You may thank yourself for it," replied the son,


"had you brought me up in a different manner, and set me a better example, this would never have come to pass. You were always complaining of the hardness of your lot, in being obliged to earn your living by daily labour, and this made me dislike work of any sort, and I resolved to live in an easier way. You never regarded the Laws of the PRINCE, nor taught me to regard them, and hence, I have grown up in vice and dishonesty. I know that my life must be forfeited for the crime which I have committed, and that you and all your other children will be often reproached, as the connections of a man who suffered an ignominious death, but you deserve the shame, as much as I do the punishment." "Oh Tom!" exclaimed the wretched parent, "is this the return you make for my long indulgence and" — "It is of your foolish indulgence," said the son, interrupting his father, "that I complain. Had you been more severe in checking my early faults, I never should have sunk so deep in guilt. You might easily have restrained me while I was a child, but you rather encouraged me in deceit and petty arts of dishonesty, and thus trained me up to the gallows. Farewell," he added, as the officers approached to lead

him to prison, "and comfort yourself, if you can, with the reflection, that you are my murderer!" So saying, the culprit left the house under custody of his gaolers. The unhappy father looked around for a few minutes, in a bewildered manner, as if he did not quite comprehend what had occurred: then, as if suddenly recollecting the last words of his son, he cried out, while he struck his breast violently and tore his hair, "Yes, I *am* his murderer!" and instantly rushed out of the room.

We also left the place, and, for some time, pursued our walk without uttering a word. I could not avoid pitying the condition of the conscience-stricken parent, though it was plain enough that his misery was principally owing to himself. He had neglected to train up his children in the way they should go, and he was now to reap the fruits of his carelessness. They who might have honoured his old age, and supported and comforted him, were now like thorns in his side. For though his other children had not been detected in the commission of any serious offences, they were pursuing a course, and associating with companions, which would most probably lead them to their brother's sad end. To their father they were

disobedient and insolent. His home was a scene of daily altercation, where peevishness, hatred, and discontent seemed to have taken up their permanent abode. The cheerful smile, the look of affection and confidence, acts of mutual sacrifice and forbearance, were unseen and unknown in this dwelling of wretchedness and despair.

“There is no end to the evils,” observed my Guide, “which result from the neglect of the PRINCE’s ordinances. Had that unhappy old man taught his children to respect the Laws, and made them regularly attend the Courts, on the appointed days, how much misery might he have escaped ! In a multitude of instances it will be found, that forgetfulness of the PRINCE, was the first step in the downward path of ruin. Many have dated their fall from the day on which they first neglected to visit the Public Courts. They may not have intended to omit going a second time, but when once they have broken through a salutary rule, very slight causes lead them further and further from the right path ; and every step they take, renders their return more difficult and hopeless. To be safe, therefore, they should be regular and punctual in their attendance, and not



allow small obstacles to prevent them from approaching the presence of their gracious **SOVEREIGN**. And were the visits to be duly appreciated, and felt to be a privilege, this would become a universal habit. They would crowd to his Courts, and be delighted to pay him homage. The healthy would rejoice to approach their **BENEFACTOR**, by whose medicines their sickness had been healed;* and the sick would be anxious to present themselves, in order to receive the cure of all their maladies, confident that as their **PRINCE** had promised to heal them, he would never disappoint their hopes.† And as it may be considered a sign of health, or of a very near approach to it, when persons joyfully hasten to the Public Courts, so may any reluctance or dislike to attend, be regarded as an infallible token, that the patient is in a very dangerous and declining state. Yonder," continued my Guide, "resides a person of this latter description. He is in the last stage of a fatal malady, and yet he fancies himself to be quite healthy and vigorous! Let us visit him," he added, and leading me through a pleasure-ground, neatly laid out,


* **Psa.** ciii, 2—4.

+ **Jer.** xxx. 17.

and abounding in a variety of beautiful shrubs, he brought me to the house.

The owner, who was an elderly man, saw us approach, and came to meet us. He received us with much courtesy, and appeared to be well acquainted with my Companion. His countenance was marked with care and anxiety, and I soon gathered from his conversation, that he was busily accumulating all the good things he could meet with for his future enjoyment, and seemed totally insensible, as my Guide had said, of his diseased and dangerous condition. After he had conversed some time about his plans, and hopes, and successful speculations, and his improvements on his estates, my Companion changed the subject, by observing, that he had not seen him lately at the Public Court.

"No," replied the old gentleman, "I have not been lately, for, to give you my candid opinion, I do not think it is of much use to trouble myself to go there. I have no petitions to present to the PRINCE, at least none but such as I can equally prefer to him in private. I enjoy good health, and have no need of the medicines which his servants are in the habit of administering to the frequenters of the



Court.* I allow that there are good instructions given, but I have the **BOOK** from which they are derived, and I can read and apply them to myself." "It is undoubtedly," replied my Guide, "a very useful and commendable practice to study that **BOOK**, but might you not derive considerable benefit from the explanation of parts of it, which the **KING's** servants are accustomed to give on the appointed days? Do you not think that those, who are commissioned by the **PRINCE** to expound his **Laws**, and to make known his will to his subjects, and who devote their whole time and attention to this subject, may communicate to you some valuable information?" "I don't see," he replied, "but that I understand sufficient without their help—at least, all that is necessary for my guidance and direction; for the words are plain enough." "Yes, the words are intelligible enough," answered my Companion, "but, notwithstanding that, how few observe and follow them! How needful is it, therefore, to be frequently reminded of their import, and to have 'line upon line, and precept upon precept' proclaimed in our ears, to urge us forward in

the path of duty ! But whether you need a Teacher or not—whether you can understand what you read without an interpreter or not,* it is your duty to visit the Public Courts, since such is the command of your PRINCE. This you must know, as you are in the habit of reading in the BOOK of instructions ; where you are particularly charged, not to forget to assemble in the Courts of your gracious KING.”† “I don’t remember reading of any such directions,” he answered. “Then I fear,” observed my Companion, “you don’t read the BOOK so often as is necessary, nor so carefully as the wisdom and importance of its instructions deserve. Had you done so, you could hardly have overlooked those numerous passages in which you are exhorted to frequent the Public Courts, or have failed to observe what an example the best and greatest men who ever lived in the Vale afford you, on this point.‡ “I hope,” replied the old gentleman, in some confusion, “I hope, however, that the PRINCE will take no offence at this omission, as none is intended. He knows that I don’t break his Laws, that I live in peace.

* Acts viii. 30, 31.

† Heb. x. 25.

‡ Psa. c. 4. lxxxiv. 10. xlii. 4. Acts ii. 46.

with my neighbours, and am an honest and good subject.”—“My friend,” said the old man, interrupting him, “none can be called a good subject who habitually neglects the KING’s ordinances. Your merits—as you claim merit for some of your actions—your merits on some points can make no amends for your defects on others—your being a kind and peaceable neighbour will not exempt you from the consequences of being a disobedient subject.” “Well,” he replied, “I cannot think that the PRINCE will look upon my absence from his Court, as a serious offence, since I have nothing particular to go for. Had I any of the diseases with which some poor creatures are afflicted, or had I broken his Laws as many others do, or cheated him of his dues, like some others who pretend to be very faithful to him, there might then be reason enough for me to go and beg his pardon, or request his assistance.” “Still,” answered my Companion, “as it is his pleasure that *all* his subjects should visit his Courts regularly, and as you cannot doubt the wisdom of his ordinances, can it be prudent or reasonable, or respectful, to oppose his will, or to question the utility of his regulations?” “Oh, I don’t think he

will notice such small matters," replied the old gentleman, impatiently, "so long as I do no harm to any body."

Seeing it to be quite useless to reason with such a character, my Guide took my arm and led me away from the house, his countenance exhibiting marks of sorrow and compassion for the man's gross ignorance and infatuation.

"This poor gentleman," observed my Companion, "affords you another instance of the baneful influence which the disease, common to all the inhabitants of the Valley, possesses over those who reject the appointed remedy. He is dying, and yet is he looking forward to many years of life and enjoyment. He professes to reverence his PRINCE, and yet habitually disobeys his commands. He allows that he is wise and good, and yet will not follow his directions. He boasts too of seldom offending against the Laws, but he is daily transgressing several of them. He is extremely ignorant, yet has he such a conceit of his own shrewdness and ability, that he looks with contempt upon the obedient subjects of the PRINCE, because they "lean not

to their own understanding," but seek for counsel and guidance at the Courts of Public and Private Audience. He calls them slaves, and needlessly precise in their conduct; for he is incapable of observing that the service which *he* regards as a burden, is *their* happiness and delight, and that the yoke which they willingly bear is light, easy, and consistent with perfect freedom."*

"And can no means be devised," I inquired, "to convince him of his danger?" "He has already resisted various attempts to bring him to a sense of his folly," replied the old man, "and I greatly fear that he will persevere in his obstinate rejection of good counsel, even to the end. Good and evil have repeatedly been placed before him, and he has been frequently invited, and even entreated most earnestly, to choose the former and to avoid the latter—he has been warned of the consequence of despising the favour of his gracious SOVEREIGN, and exhorted to seek his presence, and to supplicate for pardon, ere it were too late, but he has hitherto remained impervious alike to threatenings and entreaties.

* Mat. xi. 30. John viii. 32, 36.

What more can be done for him? Or whom can he blame but himself, for the miserable consequences that must ensue?*

There is one very powerful instrument employed by the PRINCE, in the guidance and regulation of his subjects, which I must not omit to point out to you; and that is, a certain Remembrancer which, I believe, is given without any distinction, to all the inhabitants of the Vale.† This may be rendered a great blessing, or an intolerable curse to its owner, according to his use or abuse of the gift. When a subject is obedient to his PRINCE, diligently keeps his Laws, attends his Courts, and sincerely endeavours, and continually solicits for aid to enable him, to do what is agreeable to the BOOK of instructions, this Remembrancer is a very pleasant companion. He can go into the ROYAL PRESENCE with joy and confidence, and, in his intercourse with his fellow subjects, he so acts as to insure their affection and esteem.‡ But when he attempts to do any thing wrong, it becomes burdensome to him. While he is contemplating a breach of any Law, conceiving any

* Deut. xxx. 19.

† Rom. ii. 11, 15.

‡ Acts xxiv. 16.

evil against his neighbour, or omitting the performance of any duty, the Remembrancer causes him much pain and sorrow : and if he persists in his bad design, and actually commits the meditated wrong, its stings and torments are almost intolerable.* By frequent repetition of offences, however, the Remembrancer gradually loses its influence; its stings grow less painful, its burden more light : nay, its pressure is so imperceptible, that the guilty subject is hardly aware that he possesses a Remembrancer.† He is then in a very dangerous, and almost desperate condition. For he loses all regard for the PRINCE, relinquishes his service, obstinately rejects his offers, and, though he dreads his power, yet he madly persists in provoking his displeasure. Neither the clemency, nor the anger of his SOVEREIGN, has any effect upon him, while in this state. Messenger after messenger may be sent to point out his danger, and the inevitable consequence of his rebellion; and at the same time to inform him, that a door of reconciliation is still open, he will listen neither to threatenings nor promises, so long as the Remembrancer is either destroyed or dormant.

* Prov. xviii, 14.

† 1 Tim. iv. 2.

You saw the distress of the old labourer, whose son was apprehended for a very heinous crime. At first he was troubled, principally on account of the disgrace which would be attached to him and his family, through his son's criminal behaviour. This was merely a selfish feeling. But when his son reproached him for his negligence, in not teaching him what was right, and accused his father of being the primary cause of the ignominious fate that awaited him, the distress of the parent amounted to agony; for then the Remembrancer, which had long been inert and useless, suddenly resumed its functions. The anguish it excited in the wretched old man, was too great for endurance, and he rushed out of the magistrate's house in a state of distraction. Hence you see that some of the best gifts of the PRINCE may be, and too often are, perverted into curses, by the folly and wickedness of his subjects. This Remembrancer, if valued and regarded as it ought and deserves to be, is an excellent monitor on the first approach of evil, ever on the watch to detect, and ever faithful to warn its owner against, the enemies of his peace: but if it be neglected and despised, it will

sooner or later become an insupportable tormentor. But we are now at the abode of a very different character from the man whom we first visited. This lowly habitation is the seat of as much happiness as can fall to the lot of any inhabitant of the Vale: for its occupier is a faithful and affectionate subject of the PRINCE, firmly attached to his service, ever guided by his direction, always rejoicing in his favour, and securely reposing in his love and protection."

This account rendered me anxious to see so happy a person, and I entered the house full of the highest expectations. The door was opened by a female, appavelled in plain but clean and neat raiment. Her modest and respectful manners, and the air of mingled sorrow and resignation that appeared in her countenance, powerfully interested me in her favour. Yet, after what my Companion had just been saying, I was rather surprised to see any appearance of sorrow. "How is your husband?" asked my Guide, in a kind and soothing tone of voice. "Bad, very bad, indeed, Sir," she replied, "he can get little or no sleep, owing to incessant pain. Shall I tell him you are come? He will rejoice

to see you, for your conversation, he says, always revives him." She then left the room.

"Did you not say," I inquired, in astonishment, "that in this dwelling we should find true happiness? Or did you allude to some other house, for here I see tokens only of pain and sorrow?" He only smiled at the eagerness of my inquiries, and as the woman just then returned to say that her husband was awake, he took my arm and led me into the sick-room. The patient lay on a low bed; his head was supported, and raised rather high, by pillows. His countenance bore evident signs of exquisite sufferings, and his attenuated limbs and emaciated body led me to suppose, that his dissolution could not be very remote. Yet he welcomed our approach with a smile of unfeigned pleasure. "My friend," said the old man, approaching him and taking his hand, "how do you feel to-day?" "Happy," he replied, "happy in mind, though weak, and sometimes grievously pained in body."

"Happy!" I exclaimed, "when you suffer such dreadful agonies: how is this possible?" "Young man," he answered, in a weak but

distinct voice, "it is true my sufferings are at times very hard to bear, and nature is often ready to sink under them: but when I call to mind that my gracious PRINCE permits me to suffer in this way for a wise and good purpose, I am not only satisfied, but thankful to suffer;—nay more, I rejoice in these afflictions; for I know that through them he is preparing me for my removal to the delightful Country beyond the Lake, which he hath been pleased to provide for the reception of his devoted subjects. What are the sufferings of a few months, or even years, compared to the joy and delight of which the inhabitants of that happy Country continually partake? And can I feel otherwise than thankful and happy, when my kind PRINCE has told me, that these afflictions are permitted to fall upon me, not in consequence of his displeasure, but of his love and favour towards me; and that they are the means which he sees fit often to employ, in order to prepare his subjects for a state of enjoyment, which it is beyond the power of tongue to tell, or heart to conceive?" "But surely:" I replied, "if he desired your happiness, and could free you from those dreadful pains which you endure, he would

would you to continue so long in this
 the condition." "I *know* that he de-
 happiness," was his answer, "and
 ly persuaded of his power to remove
 offerings in a moment, by the appli-
 of a sovereign remedy,* and yet I do
 trust his goodness, because he sees fit
 should suffer a little longer : no,—after
 received unnumbered favours from his
 hand, I should be most ungrateful
 murmur at this affliction, or to doubt
 benevolence. Let him deal with me as
 sees—let him take away from me even
 intervals of ease and freedom from pain,
 as he allows me, and I will still give him
 thanks, and still believe that he is consulting
 my best and highest interests."

I wondered to hear him talk in this unac-
 countable manner, and was desirous of seeking
 an explanation from my Guide, but this was
 not the proper time. He was listening to the
 patient's observations, with a satisfaction that
 was visible in every lineament of his mild and
 venerable countenance. At length my Guide
 inquired after the welfare of the poor man's
 family. "Thanks to the favour of my boun-

* Mat. viii. 2.

tiful PRINCE," the patient answered, "they are all doing well. I could scarcely have expected, that in so large a family, there should have been none to give me serious uneasiness, but yet it is true. All my children have proved blessings to me. They are kind, dutiful, and affectionate. During my long illness, they have assiduously ministered to my wants, and exerted themselves, to the utmost of their power, to procure for me, every thing which they thought might soften my affliction. And they have, indeed, been a comfort to me: many a time have I almost forgotten my sufferings, in the pleasure I have derived from seeing the affectionate attachment, and the various tokens of sympathizing tenderness, which have been manifested by my beloved children." While he was speaking on this subject, his voice faltered, not so much from weakness, as from grateful emotion. His eyes were illumined with a brightness and lustre, which rendered his appearance most interesting, and his countenance expressed more clearly than a hundred words, the hope, joy, peace, and consolation which pervaded his soul.

"Then, my friend," I said, "you have

undoubtedly taught your family to love and honour their PRINCE, as they have proved such blessings to you; for I am informed that that is the most likely way to make children dutiful and affectionate to their parents." "I endeavoured to do my duty towards them," answered the patient, "and the service of my PRINCE was the first thing to which I directed their attention. It would have been strange if I had not done so. After the experience I had had of the goodness of my gracious SOVEREIGN, it would have been not only ungrateful towards him, but highly injurious to my children's welfare, not to teach them betimes, to love and honour their and my own GREAT BENEFACTOR. They went with me to his Court, when they were too young to understand the petitions that were offered, or the instructions which were given, but they soon learned to honour and love the place, where he condescends to meet his subjects. They were early trained in the way in which they ought to go, and, young as they were, they were grieved and disappointed when any thing prevented them from paying their accustomed visit. And this regular attendance, having become ha-

bitual with them at an early age, became their delight in riper years, and had a powerful influence upon their conduct. They soon perceived the value of the privilege of visiting the Court of their PRINCE. By their attendance, they found that they escaped from the contagion of much evil example, and heard instructions which were of the utmost importance, to their present and future well-being. And though they were not entirely free from dangers and temptations, they were, at least, better fortified and prepared to escape and withstand them: and, thanks to the continual favour of the PRINCE! they did not fall into any of those grievous offences into which so many others have fallen, and through them have brought down the grey hairs of their parents, in sorrow to the grave. No: their conduct has hitherto been so uniformly good, that I can look forward to the future without apprehension: and whenever my PRINCE may call me to that "better Country," I can leave them with confidence: even the thought of a separation from my aged and faithful partner, is rendered much less painful by the consideration, that our children will be her comfort and support, and that a still higher PRO-

TECTOR, will be her Guide and Consolation, even to the last, I shall go away, therefore, in full expectation of meeting them in that delightful Country, where pains and sorrows are no longer found, and where we shall live together in the presence of our bountiful and gracious PRINCE."

His voice now suddenly fell—deep agony distorted his countenance: and he sunk on his bed utterly exhausted. His wife instantly ran to his assistance, and administered to him a cordial which she was accustomed to give him during his paroxysms of agony. He uttered a few exclamations during the fit. "Hasten the time, gracious PRINCE—not my will, but thy good pleasure—what is this I endure, compared with the delight in prospect—my affliction is but for a moment—thy beloved Son endured far more—so thou lovest those whom thou afflictest—all is right, for it is according to thy will." Nature appeared quite exhausted, and he fell into a lethargy. His wife told us, that he would probably continue in that unconscious state, for some hours: we therefore took our departure.

"I see you were right," I observed, on leaving the cottage, "amidst all that affliction

there is happiness: but I am at a loss to comprehend much of what the patient uttered. What is the hope which supported him under his affliction, and made him rejoice even in pain? What is this delightful Country to which he speaks of going? What did he mean by saying, ‘Thy beloved Son endured far more?’” “Your questions,” replied my Companion, “will require much time to answer, and you must give me a long and patient audience, ere you can be master of the information which you seek. Let us ascend to the hill from which we came, and I will endeavour to satisfy your curiosity.

I have before told you, that this is called the Vale of Probation. It is thus named, because the MIGHTY PRINCE who has all power over it, permits his subjects to remain in it, only for a certain period, *on trial*. You must not suppose that this limited space constitutes the whole of his dominions. He has numerous principalities and kingdoms, far remote from this Valley. As to the particular nature of them, he has not thought it right to inform us; but thus much he hath communicated. Such of his subjects who pass their appointed time in the Vale, agreeably to his

will—who are obedient to his commands, and humbly submit to the means which he hath prescribed for preparing them for a better country, shall be removed to a glorious and delightful kingdom. Where that is situated, we do not precisely know; the way to it lies across the great Lake to which the poor man whom we rescued from the torrent, was rapidly approaching. When we arrive at the summit of the mount, I will endeavour to give you some description of this delightful country—point out to you the qualifications of those subjects who will be admitted to it—the means which the PRINCE has ordained for rendering them fit for it—the consequences of despising those means, and the happiness to which obedience leads, both in the Vale of Probation, and in the Country beyond the Lake.”

END OF PART SECOND.

THE
VALE OF PROBATION.

A Dream.

PART THIRD.

THE VALE OF PROBATION.

PART THIRD.

“ Now therefore bend thine ear
To supplication, hear his sighs though mute;
Unskilful with what words to pray, let me
Interpret for him, me his advocate
And propitiation; all his works on me,
Good or not good, ingraft; my merit those
Shall perfect, and for these my death shall pay.
Accept me, and in me from these receive
The smell of peace tow’rd mankind; let him live
Before thee reconciled, at least his days
Numbered, tho’ sad, till death, his doom, (which I,
To mitigate thus plead, not to reverse)
To better life shall yield him, where with me,
All my redeemed may dwell in joy and bliss,
Made one with me, as I with thee am one.”

MILTON.

WHEN we had ascended the hill, and taken our seat under a wide-spreading oak, I waited anxiously for the promised explanation: I did not, however, urge my venerable Companion to begin the subject, for I concluded that he must be greatly wearied with his exertions, and had need of a little rest. In

a few minutes he resumed his narrative. "I have already told you," said he, "of the fatal error into which an ancestor of yonder inhabitants fell, and thereby subjected himself and all his posterity, not only to a mortal disease, but also to the loss of a delightful and invaluable inheritance. The enemy, by whose suggestion this melancholy transgression was committed, had endeavoured, many ages ago, to usurp the throne of the GREAT KING, in the Country beyond the Lake. Having failed in his treacherous and wicked design, and being condemned for his treason, to banishment in a place of darkness and misery, without any hope of a remission of the just penalty, he employed all his arts to draw others from their allegiance to the rightful SOVEREIGN."

"Then," said I, "this Enemy is not confined to the place of his banishment, but is permitted to come into the Vale?" "Yes," replied the old man, "he is allowed to wander over different parts of this country,* and, for a certain period and to a certain extent, to tempt the inhabitants to evil. They, no less than their Progenitors, have suffered much

* Job i. 7.

from his baneful influence. He is ever on the watch to make them his prey.* And the disease which was entailed upon them by their first parents' disobedience, renders them too ready to listen to his seductive arts. He whispers in their ears the greatest calumnies against the **KING** of the country, and tries to persuade them that all the royal edicts, which have been promulgated by their beneficent **RULER**, for their security and welfare, are only intended to make them slaves. He advises them, therefore, to break their fetters and to throw off their allegiance, and to enter into *his* service which, he tells them, is full of every kind of pleasure and indulgence. They who listen to him or his agents (for he has many agents among the inhabitants of the Vale, whom he employs to decoy others into the same net by which *they* have been captivated) are, for a season, in a state of feverish enjoyment. All their evil propensities are freely gratified, all their worst passions indulged without restraint. The Vale appears to them not a state of Probation, but a place of continual pleasure, where they may, reckless of the future, eat, drink, and be merry. This **Enemy** allows

* 1 Pet. v. 8.

them freely to take whatever their vicious hearts can desire; for the more they follow the polluting and debasing pleasures which their own corrupt imaginations suggest to them, the better are they fitted for his service. They do not, as you may well suppose, while under this delusion, willingly enter into the Courts of the **GREAT KING**, or venture to seek him at a **Private Audience**. How, indeed, should they? They have entered into the service of another master, and are sensible that, so long as they continue in rebellion against their lawful **PRINCE**, they can expect no favour at his hands.

Their only hope of happiness—such happiness as *they* desire—consists in forgetfulness of his existence and presence. Hence are they careful not only to avoid his Court, but also to flee from the company of his faithful servants. For in the **PRINCE'S** Court they could not fail to be reminded of the shortness and uncertainty of their continuance in the Vale—of the dangers that surrounded them—and of the certain destruction which awaited them, if they persevered in their present course. *There* their eyes might be opened; but in order to enjoy the service on which they have entered,

they must necessarily be blind. So long as they love evil, they will naturally desire to dwell in darkness. *There* their understandings might be improved, and they might be taught to think and consider as rational beings; but the employment of their reasoning faculties—the exercise of thought, and reflection, and meditation, is inconsistent with the absolute slavery both of mind and body, in which their despotic master holds them. But if it would be irksome and painful to them to attend the **PUBLIC COURTS**, while they continue the willing slaves of this wicked Enemy, it would be equally so to associate with loyal and devoted subjects. Their conversation, their habits, their pleasures and pursuits, are so totally different from those of the **KING's** servants, that there could be no concord between them. For they who are so degraded as to cling to their chains, and to bend their necks unreluctantly to the heavy yoke of slavery, can neither confer nor receive pleasure, while in the society of those who possess, and truly appreciate, the blessings of freedom.”*

“But surely,” I said, “if the service of this rebellious Prince is so heavy and grievous, not

* Gal. v. 1.

only would his subjects desire to break the yoke and to return to their lawful SOVEREIGN, but the sight of his tyranny over the slaves which he had entrapped, would cause others to detest his service, and to spurn his alluring offers." "Such is the debasing effect of the Tyrant's yoke," answered my Guide, "that his miserable slaves, after long wearing it, lose even the desire of freedom: and though they often are made to feel how grievous and burdensome it is, yet are they reconciled to it, so long as their Master supplies them with nourishment suitable to their debased and groveling appetites. And with regard to others, it may be sufficient to observe, that his slaves are not in appearance so wretched as they are in reality. They often appear to have no cares, no sorrows, no sufferings, while they are inwardly consuming with terrors.* Their countenances are frequently clothed with smiles, joy seems to sparkle in their eyes, and the merry laugh resounds among them, when disease and anguish are preying on their vitals. Hence are many of the other inhabitants of the Vale deceived by these false appearances, and induced to venture into the society of these de-

* Psa. lxxiii. 5, 18, 19.

luded creatures. And these imprudent visitors are too often seduced from their allegiance, and drawn into the service of the Enemy. For the company of those who have deserted their lawful SOVEREIGN, cannot be frequented without injury. It possesses a kind of fascination, which it is very difficult to resist, even while the judgment of those, who are yielding to the pernicious influence, is satisfied, that it ought to be resisted.* The atmosphere in which they breathe, is charged with infection. The victim is soon lulled to sleep, and then he receives without resistance the fetters and yoke of his Enemy, and becomes his slave." "How needful," I exclaimed, "is it to avoid coming into contact with such society! Even they who associate with those miserable captives for only a short period, and without any intention of imitating their example, may be imperceptibly brought into the same unhappy condition." "The only wise and prudent course," replied my Companion, "is to avoid them altogether. A man who casts himself down a precipice, may as reasonably hope to regain his former station, without sustaining any injury, as he who ventures into the society of rebels

* 1 Cor. xv. 33.

and traitors, can expect to maintain his fidelity and loyalty unimpaired. It is like wandering from the direct way, into various crooked and intricate paths, where there is a great probability of losing yourself, and even, if happily you are enabled to regain the right road, you have the mortification of knowing, that you had thrown away much time, endured much fatigue, increased your difficulties, and lengthened your journey." "But what object," said I to my Guide, "can the rebel Prince have in drawing the inhabitants of the Vale from their allegiance? Has he any hope that, by the assistance of the disaffected, he can obtain supreme power, either in this country, or in that from which he has been banished?" "Such a hope," answered my Guide, "is quite out of the question: He knows, and feels, and trembles at, the power of the GREAT KING. Envious of his glory, and hating his perfections,—his goodness, and mercy, and benevolence, he tries to counteract all the plans which this wise and gracious SOVEREIGN hath devised, for the welfare of yonder people. Hence does he continually urge them to forsake their duty, to disobey the royal ordinances, and to follow their own inclinations which, he well knows, are naturally

disposed to evil things.* By these means he hopes to obtain a multitude of subjects, actuated by the same hateful and malignant passions which predominate in his own bosom, for the kingdom that he has established in those dark and comfortless regions, where he is doomed to dwell for ever. To that country of misery he conveys his wretched captives, after they have served his purposes, during a certain period, in the Vale. He there rules over them with a rod of iron, and satisfies his malevolence by the contemplation of their misery and despair. For when they are once taken to that dreadful kingdom, there is an end to every hope of breaking his bonds, and escaping from his power. When once they have crossed the great Lake as his servants, they remain irremediably his afflicted and tormented slaves. What their sufferings are it is impossible for tongue to utter, or even for heart to conceive. But that which adds incalculable weight to their anguish, is, the despairing conviction, that their woes can never have an end. Look at yonder mountain, whose summit is hid among the clouds, and whose base is hundreds of miles in circuit. Were that prodi-

* Gen. vi. 5. Psa. li. 5.

gious mass composed of the finest sand, and but one grain of this to be taken away every ten thousand years, think what an immense space of time must be passed over, before the whole mountain was removed. Yet even that immense space is only a moment in comparison of eternity."

"Blind and infatuated mortals!" I exclaimed, "can it be, that you can deliberately enter into a service which is paid by such tremendous wages? Have not only affection and gratitude, but even reason itself deserted the hearts of yonder people, that they can voluntarily yield themselves captives to that malignant **Enemy**, rather than submit to the mild and salutary rule of their own benevolent **SOVEREIGN**? Deeply tainted, indeed, must they be with the fatal disease of which you spoke, since they act with so much madness. But is it not very unaccountable, that so good a **PRINCE**, since he hath full power to crush the efforts of this rebellious Tyrant, should not confine him to his own kingdom, and thus prevent his subjects from falling into his hands?"

"It is not for us," replied my Companion, "who are entirely ignorant of the councils of the **GREAT KING**, to call in question any of

his proceedings.* His wisdom is confessedly great, his benevolence unbounded, and his justice unquestionable.† Though we may be unable, therefore, to satisfy ourselves as to his mode of government, or his dealings with his subjects, we may be assured that all his acts are wise, just, and benevolent. I do not pretend, then, to explain why our gracious **PRINCE** should allow this wicked Rebel to continue at large, and to exert his malicious arts against the inhabitants of the **VALE**:—I would merely observe that, as the people are in a state of Probation, and free to choose either evil or good, it may be necessary to subject them to trials and dangers of various kinds, the better to qualify them for the happy country beyond the **Lake**. This glorious inheritance in reversion, is freely offered to all: faculties are given to them, to enable them to discern how much it is for their interest to accept the offer: assistance is promised to all who love their **PRINCE**, and desire to remain faithful to him, to enable them to repel the attempts of those who wish to draw them from their allegiance: and, therefore, if they give way to evil counsel,

* Deut. xxix. 29. † Rev. xv. 2. Psa. cxlv. 17.

and fall into the snares of the Rebel Prince, they have only themselves to blame.

Though, however, they are in duty bound to serve the wise and gracious KING who rules over, protects, and benefits them, it must be a willing service. He compels none to continue his subjects, who determine to forsake him: neither does he reject any who truly desire to return. His power is neither increased by having a multitude of subjects, nor diminished by the defection of multitudes. But from his pure and disinterested benevolence, he desires to see them all faithful, in order that they may be happy. And he rewards all those who continue in their allegiance to the end of their Probation, not because they can lay claim to any reward as of right, (for even their best services are all due to him) but out of his free and unmerited bounty. So great also is his compassion towards even the rebellious, that he waits a long time, in the hope of seeing them return, before he has recourse to punishment. Through his accredited ministers, who attend all the Public Courts, in order to announce their MASTER'S will to his subjects, he is constantly offering them a free pardon, if they

will be sorry for their rebellion, and return to their allegiance.* And whenever they are induced to listen to, and accept his offers, it is astonishing how kindly they are welcomed by their benevolent PRINCE. There are no reproaches for their past conduct—no hard conditions required, before they are permitted to re-enter his service. Even their expressions of sorrow for their past offences are cut short by his soothing declaration to them,—that they are pardoned, the past buried in oblivion, and that, as they have trusted to his royal word, and come back to his service, he will account them as good and faithful subjects, and allow them to partake of the bounty, which he abundantly distributes among his people, without partiality.”†

“But does not this undeserved kindness to rebels,” I inquired, “cause any jealousy among his faithful subjects? When they see those who are just restored to their PRINCE’s favour, receiving the same indulgences and bounties as themselves, who have never forsaken his service, do they express no dissatisfaction?”‡
 “Sometimes they have been heard to murmur,”

* Ezek. xviii. 30—32.

† Luke xv. 20—22. Gal. iii. 6. ‡ Mat. xx. 8. 14.

he replied, "but a little consideration has made them heartily ashamed of having entertained such jealous and unamiable feelings. For what just cause of complaint have they against their good PRINCE, if his benevolence to others does not cause him to diminish the bounty which he is pleased to distribute among them? If they have been enabled, through the guidance and support of their gracious SOVEREIGN, to maintain firmly their allegiance, and to enjoy the pleasures and pure felicity which his service afforded them, have they any reason to murmur, nay, ought they not rather to rejoice, that their deluded fellow-subjects, who had long been under the iron yoke of a wicked Tyrant, had escaped from thralldom, and been admitted to the same privileges and enjoyments as themselves, through the mercy of their PRINCE? Are they less happy because the late rebellious, but now penitent and obedient subjects, are also made happy? Were the service of the lawful SOVEREIGN a toilsome one, and were the allegiance of his subjects any thing meritorious, any thing more than they ought in duty to pay him, it might be allowed that they who had served him all their lives, ought to have greater privileges than others. But as the case

- is far otherwise; as his service is both a privilege and a delight to his faithful adherents ;—as his yoke is easy, and his burden light ;—instead of envying others who had, at a late period, been admitted to the same peaceful and delightful service, they ought rather to feel compassion towards them, in that they had spent so many of their years in labour and sorrow, under the iron sceptre of the **Enemy** : and to be thankful that they themselves had early been brought to seek and to find so inestimable a privilege. And as great obligations excite, in truly grateful minds, great love and affection, it may be supposed that the pardoned and restored wanderer will be most devotedly attached to his **GREAT BENEFactor**, and shew his love to him by more earnest and zealous labours in his service, than many of those who had not gone so far astray.* But to return to the subject with which our conversation commenced, namely, the transgression of the **PRINCE's Law**, by the ancestor of yonder inhabitants.

Though by this fatal deed he forfeited the favour of his **SOVEREIGN**, and became so altered in his disposition, as no longer to feel any pleasure in the society of his **BENEFactor**,

* Luke vii. 41, 42.

and sought to avoid his presence,* yet he was not left to perish in his disobedience and rebellion. The injured and neglected PRINCE still earnestly desired to save him from destruction." "Surely," said I, interrupting my Companion, "that could have been easily done by granting him pardon for his offence, and giving him the inheritance which he designed for him." "There were two great difficulties," he replied, "in the way of such a proceeding. In the first place, as the PRINCE is inflexibly just, though at the same time most merciful, how could the demands of justice have been satisfied, had he at once pardoned the offender? And in the next place, the man's nature became so changed for the worse, in consequence of the disease which commenced its insidious ravages on his constitution, immediately after he had committed the offence, that he was totally unfit for the enjoyment of the inheritance. The Country beyond the great Lake, though abounding in every thing which can constitute solid happiness, would have had no charms for him; for his affections became fixed on far lower pleasures. To transport him thither, while his disposition and nature con-

* Gen. iii. 8.

tinued unchanged, would have been as preposterous as to convey yonder swine, which you saw wallowing in that miry and filthy pond at the bottom of the hill, to a splendid palace, and to cast before them jewels and pearls, and rich garments: or as useless as to set a patient, who was labouring under excruciating pains, and was loathing all kinds of food, at a table spread out with luxuries and delicacies.

Some plan was, therefore, necessary to be adopted, by which these difficulties might be removed. The claims of justice must be satisfied, before mercy could be exercised; and a remedy also was to be supplied for the disease, to which the man and his descendants were subject, ere they could be rendered capable of enjoying the inheritance that their beneficent SOVEREIGN wished to confer upon them. These great objects were accomplished by the self-devotion of the KING's beloved Son. He voluntarily came forward, and offered to pay the penalty, which justice required for the man's offence, though that penalty was death. THE FATHER consented to the sacrifice: so great was his affection for his rebellious subject, and so desirous was he of saving him from the dreadful consequences of his offence,

that he agreed to wash away his guilt in the blood of his own innocent and beloved Son.* This gracious intention was intimated to the unhappy transgressor, immediately after he had committed the fatal act, which brought upon him misery, disease, and death.† Though the sacrifice was to be made at a future time, and long after the death of the first offender, yet its effects were both retrospective and prospective. The man, and such of his descendants as lived before the sacrifice was consummated, no less than those who came after, were to participate in the benefits of the sacrifice, if they had full confidence in the KING's word, and obeyed his directions. He extended pardon and favour to them, and after they had run their appointed course, he took them over the Great Lake, into the Happy Country."

"But," said I, "did you not state, that the disease must first be cured, and the people rendered fit for the enjoyment of the inheritance, before they could be admitted into the possession of it? How then could the mere belief, that the KING would do as he had promised, make so great a change in their disposition, as to qualify them for occupying the

* Psa. xl. 6—8. Rom. v. 8. † Gen. iii. 15.

Happy Country? "I have already told you," answered my Guide, "that the benefits of the Great Sacrifice were to be extended to both former and latter generations. They who trusted in the promise (though as yet unfulfilled) were so strengthened and animated by the pleasing hope of what was to come, that they were soon brought into a healthy condition. You know what influence hope has in checking the advance of disease, and in promoting the cure of the patient, especially if he has full confidence in the skill and truth of the physician who encourages him to hope: it was, therefore, to be expected that those who relied upon the KING'S WORD (whose truth was never known to fail) would no longer be oppressed by their former maladies. Feeling assured that the claims of justice would be satisfied, and every other promise made by the PRINCE be faithfully performed, they could not but love a BENEFACTOR to whom they were under such immense obligations. And hence would they desire and earnestly endeavour to act in all respects agreeably to his will.* They would cheerfully follow his directions, delight to be in

* John xiv. 15.

his presence, and to imitate his example. And thus would they become gradually prepared for the enjoyment of the inheritance beyond the Lake. If these beneficial effects did not accompany any man's professed belief in his KING's word, it was a proof that he did not truly believe, and trust in the royal promises: and, in this case, the disease would remain, and the unhappy patient would neither love his SOVEREIGN, nor obey his ordinances. Yet measures were taken for the purpose of directing the attention of the inhabitants of the Vale, to the Great Sacrifice, on which the pardon of their transgressions and their happiness depended.

In order to keep this continually in view, until the time appointed for the KING's beloved Son to die, they were directed to offer, at certain periods, sacrifices of different animals. By these acts, they confessed that they had transgressed and deserved punishment; and they were taught that the penalty, to which they were subject, was paid by the animals that were sacrificed. These creatures, which had never offended, were put to death, that the real offenders might be pardoned."

"This appears to me," I observed, "an extraordinary and cruel mode of reminding them of what was to happen at a future period: surely, some other way might have been devised to remind them of the promised Sacrifice, without destroying the lives of so many innocent animals!"

"Undoubtedly," answered my Guide, "other ways might have been devised, had such been the pleasure of the KING; but he in his wisdom determined to establish animal sacrifices for this purpose. And a little consideration must satisfy you, that this was a powerful means of teaching men how heinous was guilt, and how inflexible was justice. When the transgressor appeared at the place of sacrifice with the innocent young creature, whose life was to be the penalty of his offences, what feelings of remorse must have arisen in his bosom! The silent and uncomplaining victim was laid on the place of sacrifice, the knife was applied to its throat, and the purple stream gushed out before the eyes of the transgressor. Must not the sight of its expiring struggles have filled him with pity and sorrow? Would he not naturally say to himself, 'This innocent creature is suffering

in my stead. Had I never done wrong, justice would not have demanded a victim, and this dying creature might long have enjoyed life! and would not such reflections tend to make him hate and avoid those offences which required such a sacrifice?

But whatever feelings might be excited on these occasions, or whatever good effects be produced in the character and actions of the inhabitants of the Vale, the great object was, to make them look forward to the future sacrifice of the PRINCE's beloved Son, as their only means of obtaining the present pardon of their offences, restoration to the favour of their SOVEREIGN, and future admittance into the Country beyond the Lake. By these periodical representations of what was to come, men's attention was drawn, from the earliest ages, towards that great event to which I have alluded; and thus also were they prevented from forgetting their SOVEREIGN, and entirely deserting his service, as, without such precautions, they would have been too ready to do."

"Then it appears," said I, "that the present inhabitants of the Vale, very much resemble their ancestors, in this respect; and

yet I observed that their efforts to banish their PRINCE from their remembrance seem to be fruitless; for among even the most careless and wicked people, how often have I heard his name invoked! Repeatedly have I heard persons, during our late walk, call loudly upon the name of the PRINCE, when from their appearance and behaviour, I should have supposed that they had entirely forgotten him. One man, who seemed extremely angry with another, and was heaping upon him the most severe reproaches, and the vilest terms, did not forget to introduce the name of his SOVEREIGN, very frequently during the altercation. The same habit I observed to prevail even among the crowd of idlers, who were collected together near the magistrate's house, when the discontented labourer's son was apprehended."

"It is too true," replied my Companion, "that this venerable name is often upon the lips of this people, when their hearts are completely alienated from their PRINCE; and in such cases it is a proof, that they are indifferent about his favour, and care not how much they provoke his anger. Others make use of this name, in any trifling conversation,

as if they were at a loss for words, and take this method of supplying the deficiency. But it may safely be asserted that the PRINCE is seldom in the thoughts of such persons; for no thinking man would venture to treat his Benefactor with such disrespect. For if the consideration of his love and benevolence—if gratitude for the favours he had showered upon his subjects, should not be sufficient to restrain them from so evil a practice, they would, at least, fear to excite his displeasure, and to bring upon themselves punishment for such a breach of his commands. The statute against this foolish and pernicious custom, was enacted many ages ago, and is so well known, that none can plead ignorance of its existence.* They who are guilty of this evil habit, often consider it a very slight offence, but it is not so deemed by the Great Law-giver, whose Majesty and Dignity it insults. Such daring presumption is likely to cause the total loss of his favour and protection, and the wretched subject of his displeasure, will look in vain for peace and happiness. But to return to our former subject.

The time at length arrived in which the

* Exod. xx. 7.

self-devoted victim—the innocent and righteous Son of the GREAT KING was to be offered. This was at a period when the inhabitants of the Vale had become very numerous, and alas! very rebellious. They hated their PRINCE, despised his Laws, and acted in all respects as if they had forgotten that he reigned over them. They even went so far as to cut logs of wood into a human form: and others made images of stone or clay, not only like men, but representing other inferior creatures, beasts and reptiles, and madly paid homage and reverence to these senseless things, rather than serve their lawful and beneficent RULER!* As it might be expected, when they had broken from the restraints of their wise and good SOVEREIGN, they fell into all sorts of vices and crimes. They did such things as ought not to be named; and the Valley became a scene of horrible wickedness, bloodshed, and misery.

Such was their state when the KING'S Son came from the delightful Country beyond the Lake, into this theatre of atrocity and wretchedness, to reclaim the inhabitants, and to reconcile them to his FATHER'S service.

* Rom. i. 21, 25, 29, 30.

He did not appear in that royal state which might seem appropriate to his high origin and pretensions ; but came as a poor, despised subject—was exposed to want, and pain, and contempt.” “ But why,” I asked, interrupting my Guide, “ why did the KING allow his Son to appear in a condition so much beneath his rank and dignity ? ” “ As he came,” replied the old man, “ to pay the penalty, which the disobedient ancestor of this people had incurred, it was necessary that he should endure all the humiliation, sorrow, and contempt, which the original offender deserved, for his wilful breach of the royal ordinance. Though without any stain of guilt in himself, he was treated as a malefactor, since he had undertaken to suffer, in his own person, whatever justice would have required from the real offender. He was the Surety for a debtor overwhelmed with an immense debt and totally insolvent, and was, therefore, obliged to pay to the uttermost farthing, the vast demand. Hence, though he was rich, he became poor, and was accordingly despised ; for the generality of these people feel little respect for goodness and excellence, if they are clothed in a mean gar-

ment. But though he was poor, and apparently without any means of living, it was observed that he was always able, as well as willing, to relieve any distressed person who came in his way. And though he suffered many indignities and much persecution from the people, for whose sake he had consented to undergo this humiliation, he was always compassionate, benevolent, and active in deeds of charity. He deeply lamented their blindness and folly, in not seeing and accepting the gracious offers of their KING; and he was seen to weep over the distresses which the disease before-mentioned had brought upon them, and for the still greater miseries which he knew was impending over them, on account of their obstinacy, and distrust of his FATHER's word: but he never seemed to care for his own personal comforts, or to mourn over the privations and fatiguing labours to which he was subjected. He lived evidently for others, and not for himself. He shewed them their danger repeatedly; he warned them of the consequences of still continuing in rebellion to their KING, and urged them to prepare for the inheritance that was reserved for all faithful and obedient subjects.

Some of them were willing enough to listen to him, and many, if not all, desired to go, at last, into the glorious Kingdom that was promised: but they did not generally believe that any alteration in their life and manners was necessary, previous to their admittance to so great a privilege, and were, therefore, unwilling to make those sacrifices, and to adopt that preparation, which could alone evince their attachment to their KING, and their fitness for the Happy Country."

"Then was the change," I asked, "which it was necessary to make in their habits of life, likely to render them less happy during their residence in the Vale?" "By no means;" answered my Guide, "they in whom the beneficial change had been effected, and who were in consequence, truly devoted to their gracious KING, possessed a joy and delight which it is impossible adequately to express. They were happy while in their probation, and they enjoyed the anticipation of still higher happiness, on their removal to the promised Inheritance. The reluctance of the others to listen to the counsel of the PRINCE, was owing to their mistaken notions as to the nature of happiness. They attri-

buted far greater value to the pleasures and enjoyments of the Vale, than they deserved, and seemed determined to forget how fleeting and unsubstantial they were. And instead of considering how short their time must, at the furthest, be in their present state, and that they were soon to be either translated to that "better Country" beyond the Lake, or banished to a dark and cheerless region, according as they had been faithful or unfaithful subjects, they lived as though their Probation were never to have an end."

"But surely," I said, "they could hardly be blamed for enjoying the pleasures and delights which the Vale afforded; is it not the wish of their SOVEREIGN that all who are under his government should be happy?" "Undoubtedly it is," replied the old man, "and did this people follow no other pursuits, but such as were calculated to render them happy, all would be well: but unfortunately, they are too much inclined to pleasures and gratifications which have quite an opposite tendency, and are, therefore, forbidden. For if their minds were engrossed by such things as are of a totally contrary nature to the enjoyments of the happy Country, it is evident

that they must be unfit for, and fail of attaining, that glorious reward. Hence the KING's beloved Son was continually beseeching the misguided people to seek after those pleasures and objects, which were suitable to the expectants of so bright a reversion."

"Perhaps," I replied, "they were not sufficiently informed of the value of the promised inheritance, and of the wretchedness of the place of banishment, to have either hopes, or fears on the subject." "Then it was their own fault;" replied my Companion, "for previously to the appearance of the KING's Son, they had been told repeatedly, by messengers of undoubted veracity, that the Kingdom which was in store for the faithful and obedient, was delightful and glorious beyond conception: and they were equally warned of the consequences of provoking the KING's displeasure.* Afterwards they received a still more clear declaration as to the things which they were to expect, when the time of their Probation should be ended. The good subjects of the KING, it was declared, should be welcomed into the inheritance prepared for them, and the disobedient be driven

* Psa. xvi. 11. xvii. 15. Dan. xii. 2, 3.

to their appropriate abodes of misery.* The former are to undergo a most wonderful change, and to assume a very glorious appearance.† They were to be put in possession of treasures of inestimable value, in comparison with which all the most desirable things in the Valley, sink into utter insignificance.‡ They were to have no more sorrow, trial, or affliction of any kind, but to be continually in the enjoyment of pleasures too exalted to be adequately described.|| The latter were to be consigned to a place of unending woe—where misery and despair for ever reign, and whose darkness and horrors it would be in vain to attempt to picture to the imagination.§

To procure this ungrateful people the former blessing, and to save them from the latter evil, was the great object of the PRINCE'S descent into the Vale of Probation. For this purpose he went about teaching, exhorting, warning, and reproving, assisting the needy, and curing the diseased—and for this he, at last, voluntarily submitted to endure a most cruel death. Yet, strange as it must appear

* Mat. xxv. 34, 41. † Phil. iii. 21. Mat. xvii. 2.

‡ Mat. vi. 20. || Rev. xxi. 1—5. xxii. 1, 6.


§ Luke xiii. 27, 28. Mat. xiii. 42.

to you, this people too generally feel no affection for the person or service of their Benefactor, and, consequently, are unwilling to relinquish even the vain, and fleeting, and pernicious gratifications of the Vale, for the joys of the promised Inheritance. Though so much has been done and suffered for their sake;—though by the sacrifice of his beloved Son, the KING is now enabled to exercise mercy, where he otherwise must have passed a sentence of condemnation, multitudes of his subjects still persevere in rebellion. Though they daily see one after another of their fellows carried away over the Great Lake, either to the Happy Country, or to the place of Banishment, it seems to make little impression upon them. They still love the Vale, beyond all reasonable bounds, notwithstanding the sorrows and trials, and sufferings, which all, more or less, endure; and are as indisposed to prepare for their departure from it, as if they knew not how brief is the utmost period allowed for their continuance in it, and as if they had never been warned to flee from its delusive and destructive attractions.”*

“What a thoughtless and infatuated race!”

* Psa. xc. 10. Micah ii. 10.

I exclaimed, looking down into the Vale with emotions far different from those which occupied my bosom, at my first sight of it: "Can nothing be found which might rouse them to a sense of their danger? Could no other messengers be sent by the KING with greater power of persuasion, or more powerful evidences of the truth of their declarations, than any which have hitherto appeared?" "They have resisted," answered my Guide, "the exhortations and advice of the most confidential of the KING's servants, though their credentials were such as no reasonable man could doubt. They have turned a deaf ear to the entreaties, and warnings, and promises, even of the KING's beloved Son, who gave still more powerful tokens that he spoke and acted under the authority of the GREAT SOVEREIGN; what more, therefore, could be done to rescue them from their obstinate persistence in rebellion? They have been treated as reasonable and accountable creatures, free to receive and free to reject the message of reconciliation, and they have deliberately refused to hearken and obey; the clemency of their KING, therefore, cannot be called in question when they shall be



punished, as his justice requires, after the period allotted them in their present abode. Were he to afford them still clearer evidence, this would be to force,—not to persuade them, to enter into his service. And his subjects must willingly, and even joyfully obey him, or they cannot live in his favour here, or be received afterwards into the Happy Country. His proclamations to the rebellious are widely dispersed, in which they are entreated to lay down their arms, and to return to a SOVEREIGN, who is far more pleased to pardon, than to punish; and his servants are regularly in attendance at the Public Courts to teach, direct, and advise, the various descriptions of persons who present themselves. The good effects of listening to those proclamations, and of frequenting, in a proper spirit, the Court of their SOVEREIGN, and the evils which invariably follow a disregard of these things, are sufficiently apparent. They find, by bitter experience, how impossible it is to obtain peace and happiness in the pursuit or acquisition of any thing which the Valley affords: and they see how tranquil and cheerful are those subjects, who implicitly follow the directions and commands of their beneficent

KING. But if they will not abandon what is not only useless, but injurious, nor seek to have that disposition and those qualifications, which are absolutely necessary to their peace and comfort in the Vale, and to their admission into the Kingdom beyond the Lake, the fault is evidently owing to themselves. Justice has been satisfied, and mercy and pardon are offered, but they turn away from the offer: a Fountain is within the reach of all, where all that are willing may approach, and wash, and be cured of the disease with which they are attacked; but it is, comparatively speaking, little frequented. And owing to this refusal, though all are invited to prepare for a translation into the New Kingdom, multitudes will be excluded from it. They will not come to the Fountain, and, therefore, cannot become Denizens of a glorious City, where no persons that continue tainted with the disease before mentioned, can possibly be received.”*

“Are these people,” I inquired, “easily taught how they are to live in the Vale, so as to be gradually fitted for the high destination that is offered to them?” “Yes;” he

replied, "thanks to the care and foresight of their gracious SOVEREIGN, abundant means are supplied for promoting this object. They are brought, even during the tender age of infancy, into the Public Courts, to be enrolled in the service of their KING. Even while too young to know what allegiance means, they have from time immemorial, been devoted to his service by their parents. And this is done by a peculiar ceremony, which was sanctioned and commanded by the Son of the GREAT RULER, before he finally left the Vale.* After the children are thus admitted into the KING's service, it is expected that the parents will carefully instruct them in their various duties—to fight against the enemies of their SOVEREIGN—to avoid whatever may give him offence—and to obey and be faithful to him as long as they live. Where parents truly discharge this duty, there is every reason to hope that the children will become good subjects."†

"It appears to me," I answered, "very singular, that young children should be required to enter into so important an engagement. I should have thought that it would have been better to have instructed them from their in-

* Mat. xxviii. 19.

† Prov. xxii. 6.

fancy, in such knowledge as was requisite, and then to have brought them to Court to promise allegiance." "The Son of the KING," answered my Companion, "who knew well the capabilities and dispositions of both young and old, was so far from considering children as unfit to be brought into the KING's presence, that he delighted to have them near him, and declared that they possessed qualities, in which older and wiser persons were often deficient, but which were absolutely requisite for those who should enter into the Happy Country.* And it had been ordained by order of the GREAT RULER, many ages before, that very young children should be enrolled, by a certain rite, among the KING's subjects.† This custom continued until the appearance of the KING's beloved Son; and he, having full power from his Father, to make alterations in the mode of admission into his service, was pleased to establish an easier rite, and to command its universal adoption.‡ And his servants, whom he ordained to preside in the Public Courts throughout the Vale, have continued this custom to the present day."

* Mat. xviii. 3, 4.

† Gen. xvii. 12.

‡ Mark xvi. 15, 16. Col. ii. 11, 12.

"But as these subjects," I said, "are admitted so young into his service, is it not likely, however well they may be instructed in their duties, that they will be less impressed with the nature of their obligations, than if they were to promise allegiance, when they were at years of discretion?" "Since this custom," replied the old man, "succeeded that rite of admission which was absolutely commanded by the KING, and he, in his wisdom, thought proper to allow, and even to order young children to be thus admitted, it is not for us to call in question, either its wisdom or propriety, or to fancy that *we* could point out a more proper period for admission to his service. But in order to keep those admitted in remembrance of their solemn engagement, the servants of the PRINCE instituted a most wise and useful custom, which has been universally practised from a very early period to the present times. As soon as children were old enough to understand the nature of the allegiance and duties, which they owed to the Sovereign RULER, they were required to come before the venerable Presidents of the Public Courts, and there openly to repeat, and confirm the engagement to be loyal and faithful, which they had entered into during the tender age of infancy.

After this, they are entitled to attend and to participate at a solemn Banquet, which is given at certain periods in the Public Courts, and from which no true and faithful subject will absent himself, without absolute necessity. It was commanded to be celebrated in memory of the generous self-devotion of the KING's Son, in favour of the inhabitants of the Vale."*

"Then, doubtless," I said, "all the people who acknowledge how much they are indebted to that great sacrifice, are eager to shew their love and gratitude to the PRINCE, by crowding to his banquet on those occasions?" "Alas!" replied my Companion, "multitudes even of those who profess themselves his subjects, and regularly attend his Courts, are so insensible of the weight of their obligations to him, and so deaf to the voice of gratitude, and to the call of duty, as generally to neglect the invitation."

"Perhaps," I answered, "there are no particular benefits attached to the observance of this institution?" "On the contrary," said the old man, "it leads to the happiest results when rightly attended; that is, when the guests have, previously to their coming, taken a retrospect of their past conduct—are truly sorry for

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

every act of disobedience which they may have manifested towards their KING—are resolved to serve him more devotedly for the time to come, and feel grateful for the great Sacrifice through which, when rebels, they had been reconciled to their SOVEREIGN, and admitted to his favour. Such faithful guests receive, on these occasions, a degree of comfort and joy which it is not easy to describe, and have their good resolutions much strengthened and encouraged. Hatred, ill-will, malice, can find no place in the hearts of those who come rightly disposed to this banquet. That it has, indeed, a great tendency to promote peace and goodwill among the KING's subjects, you cannot doubt, after you know the peculiar circumstances in which this festal commemoration was instituted.

The beloved Son of the KING, after spending some time in yonder Vale, for the purpose of instructing and benefitting the people, perceived that his enemies (for amiable, benevolent, and inoffensive as was his whole life, he had many enemies) were resolved to bathe their hands in his blood. He, therefore, calmly prepared to suffer. And though this act of self-devotion was attended with circumstances peculiarly

painful and heart-rending, he always appeared to disregard himself, and to think only how he might do good to his followers, and even to his murderers. At a time when he well knew that he was about to be betrayed by one, whom he had long treated as a friend, and to be forsaken by all who loved him, he yielded not to the sorrow which the contemplation of such treachery, ingratitude, and weakness, must have occasioned in his bosom, but prepared to institute a memorial, which might be a source of consolation and joy to his followers, to the remotest generations.* He called together the few attendants, whom he had chosen as his messengers to the inhabitants of the Vale, and sat down with them to supper. This was on the evening when he was betrayed into the hands of his enemies, who soon after put him to death; and the traitor who sold him to the murderers, was sitting at the table with him, and preparing to accomplish his detestable scheme.† But well as he knew this, he made no attempt to save himself. He had come into the Vale for the good of the people, and he was ready to die for them, whenever his hour might arrive. The supper being ended, he took bread, and brake

* Mat. xxvi. 21, 56.

† Luke xxii. 21.

it, and gave a piece to each of his followers ; he then offered a cup of wine to each, and bade them to eat and drink in remembrance of him. This was a very significant and affecting scene, though his followers did not at the time understand its meaning so well as they did afterwards. The broken bread represented his body, bruised and mangled, and broken, by the rods of his executioners ; and the wine represented his blood which was soon to be shed, in order to procure the pardon for this ungrateful people."

"But why," said I, "was it necessary to institute and to continue such a memorial ; surely so great and generous a sacrifice as the PRINCE made, was not likely ever to be forgotten !" "I will answer your question," he replied, "by asking another : Suppose you had a friend, whom you dearly loved, at the point of death—a friend who had during his whole life given you the highest tokens of his affection, and shown the greatest solicitude for your happiness, and, even in the anticipation of all the agonies of a mortal disease, was still considering how he might best contribute to your welfare : suppose such a friend should make it his last, dying request, that you and all who

loved him, would meet together, at stated times after his death, and perform certain acts, neither difficult nor troublesome, as a memorial of your benefactor and friend, would you hesitate to fulfil his desire?" "Oh, no!" I answered, "never could I be guilty of such base ingratitude." "And suppose," continued my Guide, "that the service which he enjoined you and his other friends to perform, was of great benefit to you—was calculated to excite in you, affectionate and amiable feelings, to confirm and strengthen you in good and virtuous purposes, and to impart to your mind an unspeakable joy and tranquility, would you then be likely to omit the prescribed service?" "Were I to neglect it," I replied, "my ingratitude would only be exceeded by my folly: no: I would thankfully at all times, when it was in my power, sacredly discharge the duty which my Benefactor had enjoined, and rejoice to adopt the means, which he had pointed out, for keeping up the remembrance of my benevolent and disinterested friend." "And if," added my Companion, "he were far wiser than yourself, and you were quite sure that he well knew what would conduce to your happiness, would you tell your dying friend, that the mode,

which he suggested, of commemorating his goodness to you, was quite superfluous, as you would never forget him?" "No, surely," I replied, "I should never presume to call in question the propriety and usefulness of any thing which my wise Benefactor should prescribe for my good." "You have then," replied the old man, "given a sufficient answer to your question: I will, however, add, that the wisdom of this Institution must be apparent to any person of common understanding, who will take the trouble to reflect on the subject.

The people of the Vale, as I have before told you, are extremely forgetful of their **SOVEREIGN**, and of their duty. And the consequences of such forgetfulness are deplorable, as you have already seen. Any means, therefore, which are likely to make them remember their good **KING**, and to excite their affection and gratitude towards him, must, if duly employed, be attended with advantage. But the commemorative festival, in question, is calculated beyond all other means, to effect these beneficial purposes. While the Public and Private Courts of Audience give to the inhabitants of the Valley, ready and constant access to the presence of their **GREAT RULER**, and

afford them many facilities for obtaining assistance, instruction, and guidance in their journey to the promised Happy Country, this Banquet shews them, in a simple, yet lively and affecting manner, that grand Sacrifice of the KING's beloved Son, from which alone all the appointed means for improving this people, derive their value and efficacy. In this representation of his sufferings and death, they see how imperative are the demands of justice, and how heavy is the penalty which, but for this sacrifice, they must themselves have paid; and they admire and love the character of their Benefactor, and are anxious to obey his commands, and to imitate, as far as possible, his example. The more he is brought to their remembrance, the more disposed are they to serve and reverence their gracious KING, and to be kind and friendly to their neighbours. For ready as yonder people are to desert from their lawful SOVEREIGN, and great as is their propensity to quarrel with each other about the merest trifles, and to retain in their bosoms malice, hatred, and a desire of revenge, could they, do you think, fly from their allegiance when they remembered, that their benevolent KING had yielded up his own Son for their

sake ? Or could they resolve to entertain bad feelings against any of their fellow-creatures, when they called to mind how much that self-devoted PRINCE had loved them, how readily he forgave the most cruel insults and injuries, and how earnestly he laboured for the welfare and happiness of his worst enemies ?* Oh, no ! Were they duly to prepare for this solemn commemoration, and never to allow any unnecessary cause to prevent them from attending as guests at their PRINCE's Table, there would soon be an end to the provocations, disputes, and hostility, which disgrace so many of the people. Pride would be humbled to the dust, by the recollection of the PRINCE's humiliation and sufferings ; enmity disarmed by remembering his patient and forgiving spirit ; selfishness restrained, if not subdued, by calling to mind his self-denying and disinterested conduct ; and yonder Vale would become the Paradise which it appears at a distance. For though it would still be the Vale of Probation, and the inhabitants be subject to trials and sorrows, yet the favour of the KING would be so abundantly given to them, that they would never fail to receive strength to overcome the former,

* 1 John iv. 9—11.

and peace and consolation under the latter. The delightful hope of one day entering the Happy Country, would be an inward source of joy, to which they could flee in every time of adversity: their firm trust in the KING's gracious promises would animate them to resist the assaults, and allurements of the Enemy, who prevailed over their first ancestor: their love to the generous PRINCE, who had procured them pardon and reconciliation, would urge them to imitate his meekness, patience, piety and goodwill; and, thus, as they were passing through the Vale, they would be gradually acquiring those dispositions and feelings, which qualify them to enjoy the unspeakable pleasures of the glorious Kingdom beyond the Lake."

"How lamentable it is," I observed, "that any inhabitant of the Valley should fail of obtaining that bright inheritance, when their beneficent SOVEREIGN has provided such ample means for preparing his subjects to enjoy it! The regularly appointed Days—the Public Courts—the Private Audience—the periodical Commemoration of the Great Sacrifice—surely these frequent opportunities for improvement, must render those persons who are at last rejected, totally without excuse. But you

stated, that some of the people were in the habit of using the prescribed means, but without deriving the benefits which they are calculated to afford, do you then consider that those who attend the Public Courts, *may* lose the promised inheritance, no less than the openly rebellious and disobedient?" "The condition of those subjects," he answered, "who content themselves with cold and formal visits to the Courts of their SOVEREIGN, is certainly dangerous. For the service which they offer, proceeds merely from habit and custom, and not from that willing and affectionate mind, which alone can render it acceptable to him, or profitable to themselves. Though they are not avowed rebels, yet they do not love their KING, and cannot, therefore, delight in his presence, or desire to perform his will, and while such is their disposition, they derive no advantage from their attendance. They feel weary and drowsy during the reading of the royal edicts, and are thinking of other things while proclamation is made of the favours and privileges which the KING affords to his faithful subjects. They hear without attention, because they feel no interest in the good tidings. The spirit of slumber falls upon

them, while intelligence affecting their best interests, is loudly announced ; and, full as their minds are of mean, worthless, and contemptible vanities, they close their eyes, and dream only of the Vale, and of the things which it contains.* And as they do not fully hear, so do they not truly believe, nor, consequently, sincerely desire, the joy and happiness that are in store for the KING's faithful subjects. It is too probable, therefore, that they *may* lose the offered inheritance.

I cannot, however, deem their state as equally dangerous with that of determined rebels, who openly despise their SOVEREIGN, and neglect his Courts. No. So long as they attend the place where good instructions are given, so long I should indulge a hope that they would, at length, become affectionate and devoted subjects. Heavy as are their eyes, and dull their ears, and cold their hearts, the constant exhibition of the beauty and excellency of their PRINCE's character, the repeated declarations of his good-will towards even the careless and rebellious, the earnest entreaties of his servants and messengers, may ultimately have

* Eccles. v. 3.

some effect upon them, and be instrumental in leading them to see with their eyes, and to hear with their ears, and to understand with their hearts, how unspeakably precious are the things freely offered to their acceptance. For hopeless as may seem the condition of many of these slumberers, there is an Agent of the KING, who can, by a breath of his mouth, produce a wonderful change in these careless subjects. When he breathes upon them, they are roused from their lethargy; they start, like persons who have been sleeping on the brink of a precipice, and see, at once, their guilt and their danger, and are anxious to know how they may escape from the displeasure of their injured SOVEREIGN.*

This good Agent may be expected in the Public Courts, when the KING's subjects are met together, and are sincere and earnest in offering their united petitions.† Influenced by his benign presence, many of the people learn to be obedient to the Laws, and to be zealous in the practice of every virtue. They derive from him much consolation and joy.‡

* John xvi. 8.

† Acts viii. 14, 17. Luke xi. 13.

‡ Gal. v. 22, 23.

He causes them to feel a daily increasing affection for their **KING**,* so that they look up to him as a kind and indulgent Father.† He enables them in prosperity to be humble, in adversity to be patient, in trials of any kind, when they might fall through weakness, he helpeth their infirmities, and in affliction he is an invaluable comforter. It is by his assistance that the frequenters of the **Public Courts** and **Private Audiences**, are able to ask of their beneficent **SOVEREIGN**, such favours, as are really profitable to them.‡ But the effect of his influence over those to whom he is sent, and by whom he is willingly received, is manifested, not only in their increasing loyalty and attachment to their **GREAT RULER**, but also in their kind and friendly conduct towards their fellow-subjects. Selfishness is banished from their bosoms ; they feel a lively interest in the welfare of all the sojourners of the Vale, and gladly avail themselves of every opportunity to do them service. Through his unerring guidance, they are brought away from the devious and crooked paths of the Valley, into those good and secure ways where peace and

* Rom. v. 5.

† Rom. viii. 15, 16.

‡ Rom. viii. 26.

pleasantness are found,* and enjoy a foretaste of those pleasures which will be theirs without interruption in the Happy Country.”†

“And does this benign Agent of the KING visit all his subjects?” “Yes: we are authorized by his royal declarations to believe that he passes by none.‡ But alas! though he stand and knock at the door of each inhabitant of the Vale, how seldom do they open the door, and cordially receive this most valuable guest! How often do they grieve him by persisting in evil practices, and drive him from them, by allowing corrupt and impure guests to enter, and take up their abode in the apartments, which he had purified and furnished for himself!|| How many repel his approach by their disunions and quarrels!§ Multitudes also close their ears against his suggestions, because they are unwilling to relinquish the corrupt habits and debasing inclinations in which they have long indulged. Not that they are always ignorant how contrary such indulgences are to their true interests: neither, perhaps, do they intend *always* to retain them; but they wish

* John xvi. 13.

† Eph. i. 13, 14.

‡ Joel ii. 28.

Titus ii. 11.

Rev. iii. 20.

|| Mat. xii. 44.

§ Eph. iv. 3, 30—32.

to continue, for a time longer, in the pursuit of certain pleasures and gratifications;—but they mean, at a future period, to abandon whatever is displeasing to the SOVEREIGN, and to form habits, and to join in pursuits, that are agreeable to the suggestions of this good Agent. This procrastination is no less dangerous than presumptuous. For they who thus defer their reformation from day to day, become more and more hostile to any change for the better, and generally proceed to the end of life, indifferent about their KING's favour, and unprepared for an admittance into his new Kingdom. By refusing to hear him when he calls, they often lose a golden opportunity which will never again occur. Despised, and rejected, and grieved by their obstinacy, the good Agent finally leaves them to their fate.* Hence, though he calls upon many, it is but with few that he chooses to make his abode."

"Yet," I observed, "as it would be for their interest to follow his suggestions, for they would then enjoy their KING's favour, and, consequently, be happy, how preposterous is their conduct! They intend at some future

* Rev. xxii. 11.

period, to follow his directions, which, they allow are calculated to make them very comfortable while in the Valley, and to fit them for a residence in the promised Kingdom beyond the Lake, but they would rather *not yet* receive such inestimable benefits! Can any folly be greater than theirs? It is as if they reasoned, 'we hope to be good, and, consequently, happy subjects *some time*, but we had rather continue under the displeasure of our SOVEREIGN, and, therefore, wretched a little longer!' " "They imitate," answered my Guide, "the perverse conduct of those children which you saw near one of the cottages at the foot of the mountain. They were rolling in the dirt and filth of the channel, and seemed to take delight in seeing their garments covered with mud. And when their Father called to them to come into the house, that they might be washed, and made fit to join the guests at his table, they obstinately refused, and desired to continue in their dirty state a little longer.

But the folly and infatuation of these inhabitants are immeasurably greater, when the consequences are taken into consideration. If they persist in their refusal to admit this good

Agent into their houses, he will, at length, cease from his visits.* And when their eyes are, at last, opened to see the greatness of their danger—when they are about to pass through the Great Lake, and, not being prepared for the enjoyment of the Happy Country, have to look forward only to a bitter portion in the Kingdom of darkness and misery—it may be too late to call for the aid of this oft-rejected messenger of their gracious KING. They may seek him, but he will not be found.† Having long resisted the entreaties of their best friends, spurned at the offers of their merciful PRINCE, and despised the means which he had provided for their benefit, they are now left in a state of utter despair. The last, lingering look which they cast on their past course of life, is unsatisfying and comfortless, and the prospect before them, still more horrible and tremendous.”‡

“ Ah !” I exclaimed, “ what madness possesses yonder people ! Their highest pleasures are but transitory, and, even while they last, unequal to their expectations, yet they purchase them at the risk of an eternity of woe !

* Gen. vi. 3.

† Prov. i. 24—31.

‡ Rom. ii. 8, 9.

Rev. xiv. 10, 11.

They might live in the favour of their KING, and enjoy free intercourse with him, and thus be acquiring a noble and elevated character, but they prefer the base, grovelling, and slavish yoke of their inveterate Enemy! Riches which can never fail them, are freely offered to their acceptance, yet they set their affections on a few heaps of dust which the wind may speedily disperse! After a few years' residence in the Vale, they must all leave it—some to inhabit a blessed and glorious Country—others to go to the place of banishment where hope never enters, and joy and peace, are utterly unknown—yet the vast majority of them refuse the former, and choose the latter! I cannot find words to express my astonishment at their folly, my indignation at their ingratitude, my pity for their blindness! Surely, if any, even the least, portion of common sense remained to them, they would not thus throw away their only means of happiness. No rational creature could thus neglect a short preparation, when the horrible penalty of such neglect was clearly understood. I can scarcely bring my mind to believe it possible, that this people can act in this preposterous manner. It is absolutely

contrary"——. Here my exclamations were suddenly interrupted, as in the agitation of my feelings, I turned towards my Conductor, and saw his countenance. Though still placid, it assumed an expression of pity, mingled with reproof, while he uttered the following words, in a tone so solemn as to penetrate my soul, and to cause the sudden termination of my dream—

"THOU ART THE MAN!"





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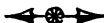
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